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# What Can Practitioners Learn from the Narratives of Young Refugees?

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Research thesis submitted in part requirement for the Doctor of  
Educational and Child Psychology

Department of Educational Studies

July 2018

## Abstract

Current dominant discourses around refugees in the UK focus on one of two viewpoints. The first positions refugees as “the other”, distinctly different from the general British population and subsequently less entitled to help, support and resources. The alternative discourse positions refugees as “helpless”, in need and deserving of support. A significant body of academic literature in this area focuses on past, traumatic and adverse experiences of refugees. In positioning refugees as vulnerable, it could be argued that the literature detracts from the individual aspirations of refugees and the barriers they may face to resettlement in the UK.

This research aimed to explore the narratives of young refugees about their journey from their home countries into the UK, with a particular focus on post-migration factors. This research adopted a social constructionist perspective and used a narrative approach in its inquiry. In doing so, it aimed to prioritise voice and empower the narrators to embrace their subjective experience and interpretations of their journey and resettlement in the UK. The narrators included five young people aged fourteen to seventeen who came to the UK as refugees. Co-constructed narratives were facilitated during semi-structured interviews. Rich interpretations were sought from within as well as across narratives. Overlapping themes included: language as an integral part of helping resettlement, experience of racism as a hindering factor, and the role of family and other protective factors. Potential implications of the research are discussed alongside an exploration of their relevance for the profession of Educational Psychology.

**Key terms:** Refugees, young people, transition, identity, narrative, Educational Psychology.

**Research supervisor:** Dr Anthony Williams

## Acknowledgements

“Was not the earth of God spacious enough for you to flee for refuge?”

(Quran 4:97)

I would firstly like to acknowledge the blessings of faith in guiding me towards the research area, and the socialist principles that underpin my views that we have a social responsibility to support refugees.

I would like to thank my research supervisor Dr Anthony Williams and my professional supervisor Dr Penny Fogg for their support throughout the research process and wider doctoral training.

A special thank you to my incredible parents, my lovely wife and my amazing wider family and friends, for putting up with eccentric approaches to thesis writing and trusting that there is method in my madness.

Finally, the most important thank you of all to my son Emré whose endless smiles and cuddles, and relentless demand for my attention, have made it all worthwhile. I’m all yours now.

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## Introduction

On a socio-political level, there are arguably few things more current than the so-called "refugee crisis" facing Europe: a term loaded with negative connotations and conjuring up polarised opinions and emotions alike. The individual and collective experiences of refugee children, young people and their families are of significant interest to me for a plethora of personal and professional reasons. I will reflect upon my personal narratives that I bring to the research and in doing so bring an element of reflexivity to it. My interest in this area stems from growing up in a community with a sizeable refugee population as well as close friendships in my teenage years with refugees from Iraq. During my time as a secondary school student, significant global events took place, including the attack on the World Trade Centre and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Through this period, there was a large influx of refugees and asylum seekers into both my school and wider community. This brought with it opportunities and challenges for the local community, that I reflected upon through my professional journey as a youth and community worker, teacher, social worker and currently as a trainee educational psychologist. As I reflected on my personal experiences, I considered what more I could have done to better support refugee families settling in my community and what the perspectives of young refugees would be.

More recently, I spent some time at refugee camps in Northern Greece with a children and young people's charity for which I previously worked. Piecing together the stories of those I spoke to at the refugee camps helped me to make sense of my experiences of refugees in the UK. I was driven to re-evaluate my thinking and personal discourses, as well considering the impact of wider discourses on refugees' experiences. The methodology employed by this research aimed to give young refugees a platform for their

narrative to be heard and shared, with the aim of deducing learning points for practitioners.

There has been a periodical ‘moral panic’ since the 1990s regarding refugees and asylum seekers in Western countries (Philo, Briant and Donald, 2013). According to Van Dijk (2008, p.59), newspaper reporting on refugees has tended to be “stereotypical or negative, focusing on immigration difficulties and illegality, emphasising perceived cultural difference and the problems entailed by them”. Conversely, discourses in academic literature have traditionally focused on past, traumatic and adverse experiences of refugees (Howard and Hodes, 2000). In positioning refugees as vulnerable, it could be argued that the literature detracts from the individual aspirations of refugees and what they may offer to host communities. One of the aims of this research was to explore how these media and academic discourses, as well as concurrent social discourses, impact upon the identity formation and belonging needs of refugee children and young people.

Before engaging with the literature review, it is perhaps pertinent to acknowledge some of the complexities of undertaking a literature review in this area. There are inconsistencies in how refugees are referred to across the political sphere, academic circles, media discourses and wider societal perceptions. The term refugee has been used interchangeably with ‘asylum seeker’, as well as ‘migrant’. Additionally, despite the existence of an academic journal dedicated to refugee studies, much of the recent research has come from Western countries with high or growing refugee populations such as Germany, Canada and the Scandinavian countries, as well as case studies based across Africa and the Middle East. Whilst some of the discussions in such literature are relevant to the current research and have thus been referred to, I was required to look back at more dated research for a UK context on my specific research interests. My literature review

was conducted between June 2016 and July 2017. Relevant research which has been published since then has been referred to in the discussion section.

This research aimed to address the following research questions:

- 1) What were your experiences prior to you coming to the UK?
- 2) What were the post-migration factors that helped your resettlement in the UK?
- 3) What were the post-migration factors that hindered your resettlement in the UK?
- 4) Do you feel a sense of belonging to a particular place?



## **Literature review**

The personal experiences of refugee young people and their families, and societal discourses around them, have traditionally been distinct research areas. This literature review will therefore begin with a wider overview of the research before moving onto looking at my specific research interests. In doing so, it aims to critically address current socio-political influences on this research area. This literature review will attempt to define the term 'refugee' before critically exploring the literature around refugees. There will then be a review of literature around identity formation in adolescence before looking more specifically at how societal and media discourses impact upon young refugees' identity construction.

### **Defining a refugee**

Refugees are far from a homogenous group of people, making it difficult to categorise or define the term. In an attempt to do so, I referred to the definition offered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) who describe those with refugee status as (Article 1.A.2):

*"Owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it." (2)*

In addition to this, on a UK level, this is a group of people who were previously Asylum Seekers but were then granted permission to stay in the UK either on a temporary or permanent basis. Refugees come to the UK from all over the world, but the majority come

from the Middle-East, Asia or Africa. Trends in where refugees come from shifts significantly depending upon war as well as social and political unrest. Currently, most applications for asylum come from Eritrea, Iran, Sudan and Syria. Interestingly, despite the so-called 'European refugee crisis' applications for asylum in the UK have risen only marginally over the past 10 years, with numbers of applications in 2017 being significantly below (less than half) of those in 2002, when UK border controls were introduced in France; and a fourteen percent decrease on 2016 (UNHCR, 2017).

In their book entitled 'Bad News for Refugees', Philo, Briant and Donald (2013) describe how there is a tendency for those with failed asylum applications to be referred to as 'illegal immigrants' by default, despite many having their asylum status confirmed at a later date. The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) issued guidance in 2003 stating that nobody could be considered an 'illegal asylum seeker' as everybody has the fundamental human right to make a request for asylum under international law (NUJ, 2005). Despite being used widely in media and in societal discourse, the term 'illegal immigrant' is not defined anywhere within UK law and has been found by the Advertising Standards Agency to be racist, offensive and misleading (NUJ, 2005).

The UNHCR (2017) estimates that there are approximately 160,000-170,000 refugees or asylum seekers currently living in the UK with around half of these being under the age of eighteen. The Local Authority in which I previously worked, is one of only a few councils in England on the Gateway Protection Programme; an approach to resettling refugees in particular areas in the UK. The Local Authority was granted the right to run the programme as it demonstrated sufficient levels of vacant properties, school places and other resources. The Local Authority in which I am currently working is in the process of developing a refugee resettlement programme, with a specific focus on Syrian refugees.

## Part two: Literature around refugees

Research in the area has traditionally focused on the adverse and traumatic experiences of refugees in their countries of origin (e.g. Howard & Hodes, 2000; Savin et al., 1996).

Such studies have made real attempts to understand the impact of past experiences on the lives of refugees. There has been a focus in such literature on the likelihood of refugees having experienced persecution, trauma and war. This focus on adverse experiences prior to leaving their home country has highlighted that such individuals are likely to have high levels of stress and psychiatric disorders, most notably post-traumatic stress disorder. In doing so, however, the impact of their experiences during the journey to and resettlement in their new country of residence has been overlooked (e.g. O'Higgins, 2012; Kirkwood, 2017).

The historic focus on trauma in literature about refugees has been heavily criticised by Rutter (2006). One of the focuses of her critique is the construction of refugees as 'traumatised'. This label of being 'traumatised' has historically been evident in media as well as in literature, leading to the pathologising or 'medicalisation' of refugees (Summerfield, 2000). It is argued that pathologising through trauma labels and 'illness identification' can sometimes be useful to people. This within-person pathologised discourse could ironically highlight the past social and environmental factors impacting upon a refugee, thus redirecting 'blame' away from them. Furthermore, it can be beneficial when pathologising may be an integral part of access to services and asylum itself may be dependent on it (Burnett, 2013). Looking at how helpful this process is for both refugees and services is a wider systemic discussion beyond the scope of this research.

Pathologising or ‘medicalising’ individuals with a refugee status remains a contested area with some research suggesting that it places ‘problems’ within individuals. In doing so, attention can be shifted away from significant and potentially harmful societal attitudes and barriers (Rutter, 2006). Summerfield (2000) debated that this tendency to pathologise can reduce what are often complex, currently-evolving experiences of refugees and asylum seekers to simple medical terms such as ‘trauma.’ Rutter highlights an important point when exploring how we write about refugees, explaining that categorising them as ‘traumatised’ detracts from post-migration experiences such as poverty, isolation and racism. It is these post-migration experiences that will be a key focus of this research.

More recent research trends have seen a shift in focus away from exploring trauma, towards an exploration of the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers as they arrive and settle into their new countries. Kohli and Mather (2003) highlighted the need for professionals to shift away from the focus on past experiences to allow for due regard to be given to refugees’ circumstances once they arrive in their new country of residence. Hek (2005) identified several significant areas of need for many refugee young people and their families upon arrival in their new country of residence; including health, education, emotional needs and social relationships. In addition to this, Hek (2005) highlighted the importance of giving refugees a platform from which their voices can be heard and listened to. In her review of literature, she explained how the voices of refugees are often silenced and oppressed both in their countries of origin and in their new countries of residence. She called for researchers to put the voices of refugee children and young people at the heart of their research. She further went on to criticise previous research in the area for claiming to have consulted children and young people whilst fundamentally failing to use their direct words and as such capture their true experiences. However, the majority of educational research into the experiences of young refugees in

the UK continues to be dominated by practitioner discourses about what constitutes good practice, assisted by statistics. It is felt therefore that there is a greater need for research to focus upon post-migration factors such as poverty, isolation and racism; which incorporates the actual words of refugees, in context of their experiences. Keeping the narratives of young refugees intact and using their actual words is an integral part of my research.

A further shift in trends around academic literature about refugees, has seen an increased interest in risk and resilience factors. These factors can impact upon the social and emotional needs and capacities of refugees (Mohamed and Thomas, 2017). Bronstein and Montgomery (2011) described how forced migration results in ‘cumulative stress’ in refugee children, resulting from the stressors of childhood being compounded by the traumatic and extraordinary experiences of displacement. Fonaghy, Steele, Steele, Higgett & Target (1994) outlined the integral role that resilience plays in healthy child development. They cited within-child factors such as cognitive ability and a sense of humour; within-home factors such as socio-economic status and education levels of parents/ carers; and outside-home factors such as neighbourhood influences and teacher expectations.

Refugees and asylum seekers are often spoken about in literature as though they are a homogenous group with collective experiences, needs and aspirations. It is argued that some of the research that sought to address the stereotypes associated with being a refugee, further highlighted them by treating refugees as a homogenous group. As they remain a small, largely non-vocal, and poorly researched group, there has been a tendency for literature to underrepresent the diversity of refugees and multi-faceted nature of their experiences to and in the UK. Two particular aspects that are under-researched include

the idea of identity formation amongst young refugees and the aspirations that they may hold for the future. Both of these are concepts that the current research seeks to explore.

### Part three: Societal and media discourses around refugees

*'I am not a refugee; it is true that I have lived in a refugee camp and asked for refugee status and the protection that comes with it, but right now, I am not a refugee.'*

(Kebede, 2010, p.4)

It is widely accepted that identity construction is influenced by wider societal discourses (Burr, 2015), arguably more so for refugees who may have a more fluid sense of identity due to instabilities in their physical, social and emotional environments. Wider societal discourses can have an influence through day-to-day conversations which can lead people to affiliate themselves with available discourses in society (Gee, 2005). As well as being intertwined with power differentials, certain discourses that are shared often enough can be perceived as being factual (Haslam & Loughnan, 2014). This discourse in turn could become regarded as a 'common-sensical' ideology within a society. An example of this is the discourse around the term refugee. The term is loaded with connotations that demonstrate a change from somebody being classed as a citizen in their country of origin, to being labelled a refugee in their new country of residence; a change embroiled in changes in power dynamics (Burnett, 2013). The previously discussed views of refugees as 'helpless' and 'desperate' can lead to a reductionist view of their identities, leading to a limitation in the opportunities available to them to construct their own preferred identities (Kebede, 2010).

Kumsa (2006) investigated how refugees identified and defined themselves in relation to the label of refugee. The research found that most individuals did not identify with the

label of refugee; although the length of time these individuals had spent in their new countries of residence, Canada, as well as having established communities of the same culture, could be contributing factors to this. The research participants in Kumsa's study identified as 'Oromos', originating from Ethiopia, and having lived in Canada for up to fifteen years, in some cases. Nevertheless, the research highlights the need to question how appropriately the term refugee is used and whether individuals legally defined as refugees see it as an integral part of their identities or rather simply a process, separate to their identity. Research carried out by Zetter in the 1990's found that imposed identities of powerlessness and dependency were damaging a part of the identities refugees sought to uphold. Phillips & Hardy (1997) and later Mulvey (2010) suggested that the identity of helpless and 'incompetent' refugees suits Government agendas in that it provides justification for keeping people out of the UK, positioning them as a 'drain' on the country's resources. This in turn feeds into the discourse of refugees being seen as the unwelcome 'other' who have little to contribute to British society. Media discourses are powerful tools to capture and influence public opinion. This is exacerbated by the perceived qualitative superiority of newspapers and their role in knowledge acquisition and opinion formation (Van Dijk, 2008). Newspapers may simultaneously produce and reproduce the language of "power holders" such as politicians, thus legitimising their opinions.

There has been significant change in the social and political landscape since the turn of the century when asylum applications were at their peak, with the idea of 'powerlessness' and 'dependency' among refugees being met with more polarised opinions. Significant recent events include: the growth of polarised politics demonstrated in the growing popularity of organisations such as Britain First; Britain's vote to leave the European Union and growth of anti-immigration, anti-Islamic far right politics across Europe.

Trends for seeking asylum across Europe show a significant increase in applications for asylum in countries like Germany and Hungary relative to those seeking asylum in the UK; with them receiving ten times as many and almost five times the number of applications as the UK, respectively. It is also important to note that the asylum seeking and refugee population of the UK is ever-changing with several countries having topped the list in terms of the number of applications made on a quarterly basis. Recent changes include a reduction in applications from Eastern European countries such as Serbia, and a significant increase in applications from Eritrea, Syria and Sudan. The majority of asylum applications continue to come from Muslim-majority countries, which was reflected in the respondents to a call for participants for this research. Interestingly, the rate of asylum applications being approved vary greatly by country of origin, from 85% amongst Syrians to 21% amongst Pakistanis; something that brings into question what constitutes a 'deserving refugee'.

There is a small but powerful body of literature which looks at how refugees have been constructed through the eyes of the media (e.g. Greenslade, 2005; Vis and Goriunova, 2015; Wilmott 2017) as well as in Parliamentary debates (Kirkwood, 2017). Such research highlighted the predominantly negative portrayal of migrant groups including refugees and asylum seekers. Greenslade (2005) cited examples such as 'Brutal crimes of the asylum seekers' and 'Britain's 1bn [pound] asylum bill'. However, Vis and Goriunova (2015) and Wilmott (2017) described trends towards increased empathy towards refugees, particularly in broadsheet newspapers. Interestingly, this followed the news story of Aylan Kurdi, the three-year-old Syrian boy whose body was found washed up on a Turkish beach. Wilmott (2017) described how media perceptions of refugees remained



broadly negative but found that Syrian refugees were 'securitised' by media, adding to the debate about the 'deserving and undeserving refugee' (Kirkwood 2017).

It is evident from aforementioned research such as Greenslade (2005), that fears of economic uncertainty, crime and healthcare amongst the general public, have been played upon with the blame being directed towards 'the other' in the form of refugees and other migrants. With continued economic uncertainty, healthcare concerns and the so-called 'European refugee crisis', it is likely that the frequency of such headlines and public affiliation to them has increased. In research conducted by Burnett (2013), refugees who were interviewed tried to distance themselves from the negative image portrayed of refugees in mainstream media. When the editors of newspapers were questioned about their negative headlines about refugees, their response was that their writing reflected the viewpoints of their audience. The interplay between media discourses and wider societal discourses is a vast debate in itself, with me taking the stance that audiences' viewpoints and attitudes are not stable constructs, rather socially constructed through the dynamic interaction with media and dominant societal discourses. The response of newspaper editors does however highlight the power of media in shaping discourses and how power can be maintained through this process.

A discourse analysis was carried out on policy and media by Guilfoyle and Hancock (2009) in an attempt to explore the discourses around refugees in Australia. Findings of the research indicated that available discourses within both media and policy were detrimental to the positive inclusion of refugees. Similar to the findings of Burnett (2013), producers of the policy and media discourses argued that they were drawing upon widely accepted social constructions of refugees. Whilst authors acknowledged the potential for

such texts to fuel the exclusion of refugees, by presenting it as a societal ideology, it was deemed a more acceptable way of talking about refugees. As is the case with mainstream media both in the UK and abroad, there lies the power for the production and reproduction of certain discourses; in this case around immigration and refugees. These media headlines therefore have the power to represent dominant and powerful discourses as 'the truth'.

Whilst there has been some research into the influence of media on discourses around refugees and the influence of policy wording around refugees, there has yet to be a large-scale study that has attempted to address the complex interplay between policy wording, media headlines and wider societal discourses in relation to refugees. Consequently, whilst mainstream media editors claim to reproduce the opinions of their audiences, they fundamentally fail to highlight how Government and media discourses interact to shape these viewpoints. Further complexities arise when the intertwined relationship between media, public opinion and politics is unravelled, particularly with certain newspapers aligning themselves to particular political parties. Furthermore, in some media outlets the terms migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants are often used interchangeably, leading to further confusion about what constitutes a refugee and thus shaping societal discourses around their need to be in the UK. Certain political parties have utilised this confusion through describing refugees as not being able to contribute economically to the country and thus being a drain on resources (Burnett, 2013).

Interestingly, following the spread of Alan Kurdi's photo (the three-year-old Syrian boy whose body was found on a beach in Bodrum, Turkey, in 2015), Vis and Goriunova (2015) reported a sympathetic and concerned response across social media, with the emergence of the hashtag '#CouldBeMyChild'. They also found an increase in the word

‘refugee’ relative to the word ‘migrant’, suggesting that there was a greater recognition of people being forced to flee. However, in related research, El-Enany (2016) suggested that images of black African men who had also died whilst crossing the Mediterranean Sea, did not elicit positive responses, rather being met with fear, and an increase of the word ‘migrants’.

Müller (2017) described ‘an unprecedented shift of dynamic in the British and German public sphere’ regarding the migration of specifically Muslim refugees, a demographic that made up more than half of the research participants in this study. Whilst the faith of the research participants was not an integral part of the research aims, I consider it appropriate to recognise potential additional complexities that may arise from this. Several studies have highlighted how Muslims have been constructed as ‘suspect communities’ in the UK (Nickels et. al, 2012; Pantazis and Pemberton, 2009). Müller’s (2017) research identified that across media discourse, Muslim refugees were constructed as a culturally inferior ‘other’ to an exclusive ‘European Christian Culture’. In his critical analysis of mainstream newspaper articles in the UK and Germany, Müller (2017) concluded that that Muslim refugees were a) pitted against a Christian identity; b) depicted as self-responsible victims that pose a security threat; and c) have responsibility for the rise of far-right parties.

### Identity construction in young people

Before exploring how identity is constructed amongst young refugees and young people in general, I aim to clarify how I will be employing the term ‘identity’. The term has become highly politically charged in post-modernist literature and post-colonial studies as well as this being translated into the drive to promote a British identity and British values in schools. In an attempt to steer clear of identity politics, I will instead employ the term

identity as employed by Erik Erikson and other psycho-social identity formation theorists. Ruthellen Josselson (1994) illustrated identity as a way of “working and loving, being and doing, narcissism and object relations, agency and communion, outer and inner...” These polarities seemingly inherent in Descartes’ identity formation theory were comprehensively critiqued in Erikson’s concept of identity (1968). He described identity as predominantly the synthesis of these dualities, “bringing the individual to the social world and the social world to the individual, in an indivisible wholeness.” (p.81-82).

Erik Erikson is perhaps the best-known theorist in the field of identity formation and ego development in adolescence. His theories were influenced by the internationally significant work of Freud’s identity formation theory or ego identity theory as well as that of Piaget (1952, 1960), a cognitive development theorist. It is widely recognised that Erikson, a psychoanalytic theorist, adapted Freud’s developmental stages framework in his theory of ego development. He expanded on Freud’s final stage, the genital stage of development, separating it out into four distinct stages roughly corresponding to adolescence, early adulthood, later adulthood and old age (Gowan, 1972). Erikson formulated the paradigm of psycho-social development which he later labelled the ‘epigenesis of identity’. His ideas drew upon the concept that “the individual is developed by structural elaboration of the unstructured egg rather than by a simple enlargement of a preformed entity” (Webster’s II: New Riverside University Dictionary, 1984); an idea with which he drew parallels in his ego identity formation theory. Erikson described identity formation as the fifth of eight stages of psychosocial development and as the primary focus of adolescence (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968). Through each stage, Erikson described how an individual is either successful in identity formation or becomes lost through a process of identity diffusion or confusion (Erikson, 1968). According to his theory, mastery of this stage of “identity vs identity confusion” is an integral part of

developing a healthy personality as an adult. In challenging the divergent nature of Erikson's descriptions, James Marcia (1994; 2002) proposed an intermediate step of moratorium where an adolescent explores possibilities before moving into the identity achievement stage. For many young refugees, these processes often take place in significantly shifting socio-cultural contexts, where Marcia's stage of moratorium can be significantly narrowed due to limited opportunities for exploration. Given the contexts in which many young refugees go through the stages of identity construction, prolonged identity confusion could have a significant impact on adult personality and emotional health.

The understanding of identity construction is a contested and complex area, with varying viewpoints coming from psychology, sociology, cultural studies, education and post-colonial theory. However, there remain some commonalities among definitions, particularly when looking at the identity construction of specific minority groups. Raissiguier (1994) suggested a very poignant definition of identity in their research of Arab and French working class females in a Paris school: "the product of an individual or a group of individuals' interpretation and reconstruction of her/their personal history and particular social location, as mediated through the cultural and discursive context to which they have access" (p.26). Of particular relevance to my research area is the focus on 'the cultural and discursive context to which they have access'. Whilst researchers may have access to particular discourses seen through a culturally-specific lens, the discourses that refugees may be exposed to may be vastly different to perceived discourses of the researcher. Furthermore, for young refugees developing a sense of identity in an often shifting physical, social and cultural context, it is likely that the discourses they are exposed to may be interpreted differently to how others perceive them.

### Societal discourses and identity construction in young refugees

Research into identity construction in refugees (e.g. Burnett, 2013) and specifically the influence of discourse on this (e.g. Guilfoyle & Hancock, 2009), have helped somewhat in shifting focus away from pre-migration factors and towards exploring societal discourses in host countries. Examples of research looking to explore the area of identity construction in refugees include that of Sporton and Valentine (2007), who employed a mixed methods design in their investigation of Somali refugee and asylum seekers' experiences of identity formation 'on the move'. A further example is that of Bek-Pederson and Montgomery (2006) who adopted a narrative approach in their exploration of the construction of family identity. However, in the methodologies employed, the research thus far has failed to adequately explore how young refugees interpret societal discourses and the impact of this on identity formation.

Identity is a construct that can be described as dynamic, ever-changing and flexible (Burnett, 2013). It is formed not from inside an individual but rather through the complex interplay between an individual or group and the social world in which they live (Burr, 2015). The available present and historical discourses within that social world help shape those identities. Even the seemingly concrete identity of 'refugee' changes with the influence of government statements, newspaper headlines and other such texts (Phillips and Hardy, 1997).

The construction of an identity can be more difficult for refugees and asylum seekers as they are often constructed as belonging outside of the society in which they now live (Kebede, 2010). As such, they may potentially develop multiple identities through a complex process of identity reformulation owing to the significant changes in their cultural environment (Burnett, 2013). Burnett describes this process of reformulation as

having three stages: the initial journey to asylum; awaiting the decision around their status; and gaining refugee status. Holt (2007) identified the significance of the notion of 'place' in refugees' construction of an identity. This concept of place is described as where a refugee sees themselves as belonging and thus shaping their identity, be it temporarily or permanently. Robinson and Rubio (2007) highlighted that this could be problematic as refugees are sometimes perceived as not having a place of belonging, particularly during the time spent at refugee camps, in the process of awaiting asylum and in their journey to their new countries.

Research by Sporton and Valentine (2007), briefly discussed earlier, explored the experiences of integration and the identity construction of young Somali refugees and asylum seekers. Their research found that most of the young people described feelings of a 'rootless' identity. As such, there was a sense of a confused attachment or no particular attachment to a place, due to their forced mobility. Much of the UK based research into identity construction amongst refugees that employed a narrative methodology has been amongst adults, and in some cases, the children of those who came as refugees (e.g. Bloch and Hirsch, 2017). In my research, I aimed to capture a sense of identity formation and belonging in young people who very recently arrived in the UK and were still in the age of identity 'moratorium'. I hoped that this would capture the 'rawness' of their resettlement experiences in the current context, rather than retrospectively as adults.

When constructing an identity, one overarching factor is the unwritten hierarchical nature of identities. Despite some criticism, there has been a government drive for schools to teach British values and help children develop a sense of British identity. Nelson (2015) explored the concept of 'whiteness', describing it as a dominant racial discourse which is seen to have privileged social status. Rivière (2008) described how this was evident in the education system as a social institution, where there is preservation of whiteness and the

values associated with it, in turn perpetuating social inequalities such as racism. Some academic writers claim that whiteness has become established as a dominating ideology which is often perceived as a desirable identity. As such, it has been described as a norm by which others are to understand themselves and construct their identities (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995). By placing whiteness and its associated attributes as a dominant, high status identity, it is likely to prove attractive to a whole array of migrants (Rivière, 2008). However, in the attempts of refugees and other migrants to achieve whiteness and by exploring their experiences through a lens of whiteness, researchers are at risk of marginalising their lived experiences (Bonnett, 2008; cited in Rivière, 2008).

Whiteness extends beyond the colour of skin and it is important to acknowledge that whiteness is not the same as being White and as such could exclude many white people from the privilege associated with whiteness, particularly White, European migrants. Research by Sporton and Valentine (2007) with Somali refugees found that many of the young people involved in the research were wary of claiming and adopting a British identity as they associated it with a White identity. In relation to how they were viewed by others, some of the young people involved in the research described how their British identity was often questioned; leading them to feel that they could only identify with a British identity in particular contexts. The complex interplay between a desired identity by a refugee and a perceived identity from others, is an area that this research aims to explore.

Burnett (2013) described the importance of 'transculturism' in identity formation. This complex process involves refugees adopting some aspects of the prevalent culture in their new home country, whilst maintaining some aspects of their traditional culture. The extent to which these cultures vary is likely to impact upon the identity formation process. This process could be seen as an integral part in the resettlement of refugees in the UK



and their development of a self-identity as well as a group identity. ‘Transculturism’ as a process takes place with influence from the powerful discourse of whiteness within the UK. The notion of whiteness often associated with successful integration of refugees and other migrants into the UK therefore shapes their feelings of belonging. Consequently, the aspirations of refugees are likely to be influenced by the academic and social privileges associated with whiteness and the extent to which they link themselves to this identity (Sporton and Valentine, 2007).

The process of resettling and assimilating with a new culture sits alongside the idea of belonging, a core psychological need as outlined by Maslow (1943, 1954). He described belonging as a core psychological need that can precede esteem needs and self-actualisation. I was therefore interested to explore the idea of belonging in this research, alongside identity. Maslow recognised that belonging needs could at times override safety needs, which I felt may be something that emerged in the narratives shared, given the UN definition of a refugee recognising the fear for life and need for safety of refugees. I was interested to see how the highly regarded hierarchy of needs that is used widely in Educational Psychology literature and practice could explain or be challenged by my participants’ narratives, given the complexities described by Kebede (2010).

Asiimwe, Fan and Fan (2015) described migrant children as being ‘caught between two worlds’. Whilst their research was not specific to refugees, they highlighted the importance of language in integrating migrant children both in their new education system and wider communities, echoing suggestions made by Nelson (2015). They considered that language barriers exacerbated the psychological and pedagogical challenges of being an international new arrival from a non-English speaking country. In their US based research, they described a shift away from what they described as racist tendencies inherent to many educational establishments, towards the embracing of

globalisation and linguistic and cultural diversity. They recommended that education systems should incorporate language policies and reinforce the ‘linguistic and cultural capital of all students’.

## **Methodology**

In this chapter, I aim to address the methodological principles of this research. I will start by outlining my epistemological and ontological positions within this research, giving due regard to the impact of these on the research design and analysis. I will then outline the narrative approach adopted in the research and explain the rationale for this. Following this, ethical considerations will be discussed, including notions of power and the need for critical reflexivity for research rigour. Thoughtful consideration was given to ensuring that decision-making in this research was driven by the need for consistency, coherence and logic (Lincoln & Guba, 2005; Mertens, 2010; Thomas, 2013).

## **Positionality**

My positionality in this research will be discussed in relation to the nature of knowledge (epistemology), its link to the nature of reality (ontology) and the nature of ethics (axiology) (Lincoln & Guba, 2005). Positionality in research is described by Thomas (2013) as my position ‘on the best way to think about the world, or by Guba (1990) as ‘a basic set of beliefs that guide action’. Ontology, the study of the fundamental nature of reality (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999), is a concept that ‘requires specialist philosophical treatment’ (Carter and Little, 2007, p.137). Thus, they argue that the importance of ontology in psychological research lies in its link to epistemology. The ontological position adopted leads to an epistemological position; whereby the nature of reality influences how knowledge is perceived. The epistemological position and subsequent theoretical perspective adopted in this research is that of social constructionism. This felt a natural position to adopt in this research as it sits with my world view that social reality is socially constructed, simultaneously situated in, and mediated by, history, culture and

language (Willig, 2008). As such, I see social reality as subjective, relative and unique for each person.

I believe that people actively construct, and reconstruct, multiple knowledges and realities of their experience, meaning that a harmonious, universal ‘truth’, cannot be discovered (Willig, 2008). Thus, I chose to deviate from traditional methodologies associated with natural sciences, recognising their somewhat reductionist approaches as limitations to this research’s attempt to study complex social phenomena (Emerson & Frosh, 2009). Rather, an interpretive approach was adopted, with a focus on meaning-making and depth; as such, no expectation of objectivity, causation or generalisation was held (Thomas, 2013). As such, I acknowledge that readers may draw alternative interpretations from this research.

This research aimed to provide an insight into the narratives that emerged from my discussions with five young people, all of which came to the UK as refugees or asylum seekers. Through reflexive thinking about the way the discussions were semi-structured, and the way prompts were used to support narratives, there is recognition that the narratives that emerged were to some extent jointly constructed. I was keen throughout the narrative discussions to prompt the young people to acknowledge the social influences on their experiences. As such, I aimed to detract the focus away from the young people as solely ‘objects of study’, towards recognising the social aspects of knowledge construction, meaning-making and power dynamics (Emerson & Frosh, 2009).

As a researcher, I was dedicated to ensuring that the research served as a platform for individual voices to be heard: a platform to take us beyond the statistical narratives often published about refugees and asylum seekers in academia and local authority publications. Consequently, selecting a qualitative method that did justice to these voices

was an integral part of my research design. It was hoped that the narratives constructed would offer an alternative reality away from dominant societal narratives often prevalent about refugee and asylum-seeking communities.

A specific ontological stance was not adopted in this research; rather a focus was placed on the subsequent social constructionist epistemology. However, for readers with a keen interest in ontological positionality, I feel that the research position taken aligns most closely with relativist approaches (Mertens, 2010). It embraced multiple realities and subsequently individual interpretations. This ontological position, broadly harmonious with social constructionist epistemological thinking, 'prepares the ground for working with difference' (Moore, 2005; p112-113).

On a professional level, I consider that my positionality echoes the paradigmatic shift within the profession of Educational Psychology, away from a traditional focus on cognitive and developmental approaches towards systemic, ecological and social constructionist perspectives (Fox, 2011). However, I consider it appropriate to refer to Erikson's developmental theories in relation to identity formation. Furthermore, this research aims to mirror the shift from evidence-based practice to practice based evidence in Educational Psychology practice (Fox, 2011). The young people involved in this research project came from other cultural backgrounds and had atypical childhoods in the sense that they fled war-torn countries and sought refuge in the UK. As such, it would be deemed inappropriate to uncritically adopt traditional, often ethno-centric models of cognitive and developmental psychology. Traditionally, educational research has emphasised value in objectivity and rationality, adopting 'expert' models of practice (Moore, 2005). It was felt more appropriate to adopt a degree of epistemological and ontological relativism, as social phenomena involving difference and 'otherness' was

being explored. This position sought to prioritise the voice of the young people, empowering them to embrace and take ownership of their subjective experiences.

## **Method**

*“The search for method becomes one of the most important problems of the entire enterprise of understanding the uniquely human form of psychological activity”*

(Vygotsky, 1978 [1930], p 65)

As a researcher, I was keen to develop questioning that was descriptive and exploratory, rather than one that focused on hypothesis-testing or focused on confirmatory questions. A qualitative methodology was thus employed to elicit rich, ‘thick’ descriptions of experiences. It was hoped that the emerging narratives would embrace complexity, rather than be reduced to simplistic interpretations (Warham, 2012). Adopting the most appropriate methodology, that would best enable an enquiry that embraced complexity, was an integral part of the research design. It was recognised that individuality and uniqueness of meaning-making was aligned with the theoretical underpinnings of the research. Additionally, the research design needed to be adaptable to meet the varied needs of the people taking part. Therefore, a narrative methodology was adopted.

## **Narrative**

Hiles and Čermák (2007) suggest that ‘narratives can powerfully reflect one of the crucial means of knowledge production that goes on in our everyday lives’ (p 4). The narrative impulse is universally present in every society, place and age (Riessman, 2008). The natural presence of narratives across cultures meant that it was deemed an appropriate method of inquiry. It is proposed by Bruner (2004) that narrative understanding is a core, basic cognitive function that structures experience, perception and organises memory. Hiles and Čermák (2008) suggested that whilst events themselves are not presented as

stories, the experience of events become stories, as they are shaped, ordered and given meaning.

In line with social constructionist thinking, narrative approaches allow for flexibility and subjectivity in its methods. According to Squire (2013), narrative approaches to research are not bound by methodological guidelines, rather offering a ‘conceptual technology’.

Whilst narrative approaches are sometimes criticised for not offering structured approaches to method and analysis, they allow for flexibility and methodological creativity. This allowance for methodological creativity is helpful to this research, where the young people involved shared very complex, diverse and personal experiences.

However, guidance on analysing narrative data and how this was consulted are included in the ‘method of analysis’ section of the methodology.

There is a plethora of research where narrative methods have been employed to explore accounts of experience (e.g. Arden, 2014; Fogg 2014; Patterson, 2013; Riessman, 1993; 2000; 2008; Squire, 2013). Approaches to narrative methods can be very varied, including interviews, diary entries, interpretations of body language, visual artefacts and social context (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2013). It is thus deemed a methodology that can explore various narrative forms. These narrative forms offer an understanding of the actions of oneself and those of others, enabling the organisation of events and experiences into meaningful narratives over time (Chase, 2007). It should be recognised that narratives can serve multiple purposes and may be used by the narrator to engage, explain, argue, avoid, justify or entertain (Billig, 2006). Complexities of narrative research are exacerbated when acknowledging that several narratives can simultaneously exist and give meaning to the same event.

Through the narrative process, narrators construct events and experiences into stories that are both socially situated and interactive (Chase, 2007). The narratives shared by the young people in this research engaged me as a researcher and in doing so created an experience for me as well as for the wider audience of this research. Elliott (2005) describes narrative stories as social interactions that are shaped by the social world of both the listener and narrator.

Narratives can be further shaped and structured by cultural repertoires surrounding the experience and the process of narrating (Elliott, 2005). For example, the narrative discussions from which research data was gathered was initially referred to on the participant information sheet and to the first participant as an ‘interview’. Perceived cultural expectations of how an interview should be, the format it should take, and the formalities of direct questions and answers, were thought to affect power dynamics and potentially shape the narratives shared. As such, wording for subsequent participants was changed to refer to our conversations as narrative discussions.

Squire (2013) proposes that even when we tell personal stories to ourselves, we speak as social beings to imagined others who understand our story. As such, participants’ narratives are influenced by the many social worlds in which they live, and their re-authoring of these narratives would have been influenced by the context in which they were sharing them. Squire (2013) therefore advocated for the social, cultural and historical contexts of narratives to be considered.

As introduced in the Literature Review, the concepts of identity and self-identity are areas that this research hoped to explore through narratives. There is a significant body of literature relating to the value of narratives in the development, maintenance and renegotiation of self-identity (Hiles and Čermák, 2008; Riessman, 2008). It highlights that



the stories people tell both themselves and others about who they are, is integral to the on-going negotiation of self-identity. The concepts of identity, belonging and 'Britishness' are often discussed in the media as well as in local authorities when talking about the resettlement of refugees. As such, these were areas that I was keen to explore. As theorised by Polkinghorne (1988), narratives of self-identity are drawn from both the storytelling of your past and the construction of an unfinished future story. I was therefore keen not to position discussions of identity as fixed or final, but rather as a multi-layered, unfinished story. In keeping with Riessman's (2008) suggestions that individuals revise past memories to fit present identities, I was keen to give due regard to the current social context in which narrators described their identities.

## **Power**

Power is inherent in all social relationships (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). Whilst much qualitative research recognises the implications of power differentials on research data, it usually assumes a perceived power of the researcher over participants. However, I would argue that this perception of power may not be as obvious as some researchers suggest. Conversely, I felt that in some cases, participants in this research may at times have perceived themselves in a more powerful position as they had a narrative to share; experiences and knowledge that I, the researcher, required. This was a position that I was keen to advocate to counterbalance inherent structural and hierarchical disparities between the participants and myself.

According to Riessman (2008), power imbalances can be successfully addressed if researchers can follow participants along their own narrative paths. Through this process, Elliott (2005) argues that participants are empowered to select what they perceive as the most significant details about their life experiences. However, I recognise that an

assumption is made here that researchers have the ability to empower participants, rather than participants being empowered from within. The idea of power being held by a researcher could lead to an unwillingness from participants to challenge interpretations and assumptions, due to researchers being perceived as more knowledgeable (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000). Despite this, Holloway and Jefferson (2000) also suggest that power imbalances in research can have positive effects. They suggest that if a researcher can recognise issues of power and sympathise with them, it could serve as a powerful emotional tool, giving narrative research therapeutic possibilities.

When dealing with sensitive topics, there is an additional risk of research participants positioning the researcher as more powerful, or possibly superior to them. This idea is explored by Hyden (2009) who suggests that research participants may view aspects of their narratives and experiences as culturally inferior to that of the researcher, particularly if those experiences made them vulnerable. To address this, I was keen to provide choices of location for which our narrative discussions would take place, when to meet, and an opportunity to choose their own pseudonyms. Furthermore, I highlighted that they were free to share as much or as little as they wanted and could stop or withdraw from the research at any time.

### **Narrative research as a therapeutic tool**

It is argued by Parker (2008) that research should not aim to be therapeutic in its approach or aims. However, it was recognised that the process of engaging in narrative discussions allowed narrators to talk about and reflect on their life experiences; thus, it could not be described as a neutral activity, but rather one that can be therapeutically beneficial (Elliott, 2005). Consequently, it could be argued that narrative studies can have both

research and therapeutics components. Personal development through the process could lead to subsequent action that facilitates positive change (Chase, 2007).

The narration process can act as a tool to allow narrators to hear alternative versions of their life experiences. Whilst my goal as a researcher was not to facilitate change through therapeutic processes, I was conscious of the possibility of this happening to some degree. Accordingly, I outlined steps in my ethics application to manage any negative emotional outcomes that may arise through the process. This included a debrief following on from our discussions and outlining appropriate support networks and methods of accessing them. Additionally, I took steps to address other factors that may influence power dynamics and subsequently potential therapeutic outcomes. This included: removing physical barriers between myself and narrators; introducing myself as a researcher but also as a ‘listener’ who was interested in their narratives; and trying to introduce myself in their first language (in most cases, Arabic) by way of demonstrating an attempt to engage them and normalising difficulties around language, appreciating that they were willing to speak to me in English.

### **Transparency and critical reflexivity**

Hiles & Čermák (2007;2008) emphasise the importance of transparency at all stages, including underlying assumptions and procedures. Hiles & Čermák (2007;2008) suggest that transparency should be an integral part of positionality, values and ethical decisions, being made explicit, rather than implied. This research aimed to use critical reflexivity as a way of ensuring transparency, rigour and quality. I aimed to be transparent across all areas of the research, including paradigmatic assumptions, the methodology and the interpretations drawn from the analysis of data.

Narrators and researchers come to the research whilst being in the midst of their own, ongoing stories (Clandinin & Connelley, 2000). Narrative researchers simultaneously experience the narrative being shared, whilst holding a curious position of influence. Therefore, whilst needing to be fully immersed in the narrative, they are required to stand back and reflect upon it. This reflexive stance allowed me to acknowledge the influence of my ideas and beliefs on the narrative being shared, my prompting and my interpretations. I therefore noted my personal voice and reflections through the research, which I have briefly reflected on in the discussion, to make my role in the co-construction of narratives explicit (Hiles & Čermák, 2007; 2008). Throughout the research, I have aimed to reflect upon my influences and interpretations from the research.

In my analysis, I have aimed to demonstrate awareness of how my prior experiences may have influenced the research but also how my beliefs and attitudes have not remained static through the process, a concept discussed by Andrews (2009). As a researcher, my beliefs and ideas have evolved and been both directly and indirectly challenged. To highlight this, I have included a section about my positionality, background and prior experiences coming into the research in the introduction section of this thesis. Despite this, Squire (2008) suggests that regardless of how much we strive to be reflexive, there will always be experience and material that is beyond the realm of our interpretation.

### **Ethical considerations**

Throughout this research, ethical principles were considered in relation to guidelines from the British Psychological Society (BPS). This included guidance regarding the principles of respect, integrity and competence. Further to this, ethical approval was sought from, and granted by, the University of Sheffield's ethics panel. Although ethical approval was not formally sought from my employing local authority, key stakeholders in the local

authority were consulted. They approved of the research, before assisting me in recruiting participants and offering venues for the research to be undertaken. The approach to research also followed professional guidance from the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) in respect to informed consent confidentiality and general conduct. In line with narrative practice, ethics were considered in relation to transparency around key decisions, consent, confidentiality and interpretation.

The narrative discussions that took place were planned to be led by the narrators, with little prompting, enabling the voice of the narrator to be the central focus of the research. This design aimed to allowed narrators to choose to a significant degree which stories and experiences they were happy to share. I therefore gave significant consideration to the concept of informed consent and how this should be sought. I felt it would be appropriate to conceptualise informed consent as a process that was on-going, rather than one than a single process at the beginning of the research (Parker, 2008). Part of the reasoning for this was the difficulty in knowing what themes or potentially difficult experiences would be shared in the narrative discussions.

Research participants were introduced to the project by either myself or a member of council staff with a strategic position in the local authority, working with refugees and asylum seekers. The introduction involved talking through a research information sheet along with consent forms for them and parents. They were afforded the opportunity to ask questions about the research and offered the chance to speak to myself or others in advance of signing a consent form. They were made aware that they were able to withdraw from the research at any point. Additionally, research participants were able to choose, and in doing so consent to, the stories and experiences they shared. They were briefed that they weren't obliged to share anything that they did not feel comfortable with and were able to decline to answer.

After the narrative discussions concluded, further consent was negotiated when narrators were offered the chance to view the transcripts. As described by Elliott (2005), the process of narrative discussions and their relatively informal nature, could have led to research participants developing a false sense of intimacy and thus sharing experiences that they may not have wanted to be published. To address this, further consent was sought to allow me to use their words in my thesis. Throughout my time with them, I aimed to find a 'safe place to stand' (Winicott, 2002), considering that false sense of intimacy that could prevail, with my priority being protecting the narrators from any potential emotional harm. Amongst this, I was mindful of the impact of this false intimacy created by the dynamic, on me. I tried to monitor my emotional responses during and following on from the narrative discussions, considering psychodynamic ideas of counter-transference and projection. I used supervision with my research supervisor, personal tutor and placement supervisor as a way of managing this.

I recognised that research questions included very personal topics about potentially very difficult times in the lives of narrators. As such, it was possible that challenging and sensitive experiences would be shared, bringing emotional responses from the narrators as well as from me, the researcher. In relation to managing this for research participants, I ensured that they had a point of contact in the form of a familiar adult and/or service that they had previously used. If one of the research participant became visibly upset, I planned to offer him/ her a break from the interview or to terminate it if required. In addition, before and after the narrative discussions, I asked how narrators were feeling to gauge whether it would be appropriate to undertake the planned discussions and whether they would require a more comprehensive debrief and possibly signposting to other services.

As previously mentioned, narrators were offered transcripts of their narratives to look over before analysis but none of them took up the opportunity to do this. I was aware that sharing with them my interpretation of their narratives, could be an emotive experience. I advised them that my understanding was one of many possible interpretations. Following on from our discussions, narrators were thanked for taking part and advised on how beneficial their input would be for other refugees and asylum seekers.

A key ethical issue in relation to research is that of confidentiality. Whilst following BPS guidelines in relation to confidentiality, I was aware of Parker's (2008) argument that true confidentiality can never be achieved in research. Parker suggested that the key intention of research is to make discoveries and present these to others. Whilst the concept of 'making discoveries' being an integral part of research is something I would question, in line with a social constructionist view, the question of what is meant by true anonymity remains. Research participants were made aware from the outset how the research would be disseminated, and the potential limitations of confidentiality were discussed. Whilst some pseudonyms were used for names of people and schools, it was felt that many details of their stories needed to remain for context and authenticity. This included details of their home countries and countries through which they travelled on their journey to the UK, as well as the names of regions they moved to in the UK. With this level of detail, there is a small possibility that people who know them well may be able to identify them from the descriptions. Narrators were therefore offered the opportunity to omit parts of their narrative that they felt were controversial or made them identifiable; an offer that was not taken up. One of the narrators, Dahnish, stated that he was happy for his real name to be used. Although I had stated in my ethic approval that pseudonyms would be used, Parker (2008) suggests that anonymity, whilst possible within research, is not always the most ethical option. Parker's suggestion was backed by the argument that

anonymity and concealing the identity of research participants can construct them an identity of ‘fragile beings’ that need to be protected by others. However, it was felt that in line with ethical guidelines from The University of Sheffield and the BPS, it would be more appropriate to use a pseudonym.

### **Alternative methods**

In my journey to choosing the appropriate method for this research, I considered several others including Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), Discourse Analysis (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Although I adopted a narrative method, I recognise that the research could have adopted other methods which may have led to me drawing equally valid yet slightly different interpretations.

*“A story cannot be simply reduced to a set of themes, although it can be seen as a set of themes where each must be seen in relation to the whole”* (Hiles & Čermák, 2007, p4).

One of the key criticisms of methodologies such as Thematic Analysis and IPA is that they reduce narratives to a set of themes (Squire, 2013; Riessman, 2008). In doing so, they may fail to adequately analyse how narrative are told in context and thus are unable to embrace a holistic picture (Patterson, 2013). Understanding narratives in context and adopting holistic approaches to my research and practice are two key aspects of my value base that underpins my practice. Additionally, whilst I have an interest in phenomenology, particularly in relation to gathering ‘capta’ or conscious experience rather than traditional data, it is arguably more suited to a relatively homogenous sample (Squire, 2013).

Discourse Analysis was considered, with me being drawn to its attempts to allow meaning to be constructed through talk. However, I felt that the focus on language could



be limiting as concentrating on this could detract from the influence of the context in the co-construction of narratives. Furthermore, as the research participants in this study all spoke English as an additional language, I felt that a focus primarily on the discourse would generate meaning making that would not authentically capture their experiences. Whilst Discourse Analysis recognised the socially constructed nature of narratives, in line with my epistemological and ontological position, I felt it did not embrace the need for the holistic view of what it meant to be a refugee and how identity is constructed through experience and context.

### **Research participants**

There is not a prescriptive measure of the number of participants for a narrative research study, but rather it is dependent on the study purpose, the extensiveness of the proposed data collection and richness of the narratives obtained (Wells, 2011). The narratives of five young refugees currently living in the UK have been used in this research write-up. The desired sample size of between three and six participants was decided by balancing recommendations from research (e.g. Cresswell, 2015; Dworkin, 2012) with time constraints given the nature of the doctoral training programme. All five of the narrators came to the local authority in which I worked in the second year of my training through the Governments' Gateway programme. They were recruited through a council centre that is specifically designed to work with refugees and new arrivals to the country, supporting them through transition and arranging housing and schooling. Although they were no longer involved directly with the service, they continued to have an open-door policy to support them and their families.

It was hoped that the sample would represent to a significant degree the current picture of refugees entering the UK. At present, the majority of refugees come from the Middle East

and identify as Muslim. The general research questions, however, were not specific to either of these groups. Narrators were expected to have a proficient level of spoken English; although opportunities to support their narratives through other mediums were offered, including bringing in pictures or items of significance. The sample covered an age range of fourteen to seventeen, with four males and one female. A brief description about each narrator is included in the analysis section of this thesis.

### **Procedure**

I aimed for a detailed exploration of co-constructed narratives in this research. As such, my aim was not to claim to have findings that are generalisable to wider populations, thus I was able to use a sample size that would not be deemed statistically significant. Data was sought through semi-structured interviews. It was hoped that rich narratives would emerge through the process of narrating their journey from their home country to the UK, with a focus on post-migration factors. Prior to exploring the research questions, an informal conversation was had between me, the researcher, and narrator to help us to get to know each other and subsequently create a more trusting, safe space for discussion, described by Ncube (2006) as ‘a safe place to stand’. The aim of this was to build rapport and gather further qualitative information that may guide later prompting. The narrative discussions were recorded using a Dictaphone and transcribed before being analysed. Data was stored securely as a password-protected file on a personal laptop which is also password-protected.

This study employed a narrative approach that is well-aligned with a social constructionist paradigm. The research focused on eliciting rich accounts of unique experiences, acknowledging the concept of multiple ‘knowledges’ rather than ‘knowledge’ (Willig, 2013). The sequence in which these experiences and events create a

plot and thus generate meaning, are an integral characteristic of narrative research (Bruner, 2004).

Given that the narrators were relatively new to the country, language was identified as a potential barrier to them expressing themselves; alternative mediums of communication such as drawings could therefore help support their narrative from this perspective. The potential language barrier was given due consideration when seeking research participants. Unfortunately, this also made recruitment of participants difficult, leading me to extending timescales. Whilst there was significant interest in the research, most of the interested young people did not speak a proficient level of spoken English.

Consequently, one narrative discussion needed to be terminated as it was mutually agreed that a translator would be required for the session to be productive and ethically sound.

### **Analysis of data**

Narrative approaches allow for significant flexibility in interpretation, relative to other qualitative approaches. It allows for extended narratives to be preserved as a coherent story, rather than being fragmented or coded for analysis. Hearing a narrative in its entirety 'allows the reader to think beyond the surface of a text...knowledge is constructed in the everyday world through an ordinary communicative act – storytelling' (Riessman, 2008, p.14). Narrative approaches strongly emphasise how individuals are shaped by their past experiences as well as their interactions and social contexts. Gubrium and Holstein (2008) suggest that individuals convey their stories that are not solely about them but rather in the context of a social world, developing a story that is enhanced by social experiences. In terms of analysing the narrative, they highlight that researchers should give due regard to not only what is said but also how it is said and the conditions and contexts in which the narrative story is assembled. Sikes and Gale (2006) describe

narratives as an unavoidable, powerful tool for communication that can evoke feelings of empathy and relatedness that other research methods cannot.

Riessman (2008) describes narratives on a continuum: at one side is a discrete unit of discourse from an answer to a single question which is centred around a particular topic; on the other side, it can take the form of an entire life story through interviews, drawings, pictures and observations. Narratives reflect the cultures in which they are shared and in doing so have the power to shape social worlds by presenting a challenge to dominant discourses that may exist in a society about particular subjects (Goodley & Smailes, 2011). In my analysis, I aimed to put some focus on how the narratives shared reflected the cultures the narrators came from, travelled through and currently live in.

The narratives shared by the young people varied significantly in the level of depth and subsequently the volume of data generated. The semi-structured interview technique and epistemological approach taken meant that analysing the data was a very complex process. Semi-structured interviewing techniques and data gathered from narrative research are compatible with various methods of analysis (Willig, 2013). For this research, a narrative analysis approach was employed to explore the construction of identity through the journey of young refugees and their resettlement in the UK. Through thorough engagement with the interview data gathered, I aimed to bring co-constructed meaning and different interpretive perspectives to the narratives (Riessman, 2008).

### **Method of Analysis**

There are no set conventions regarding the process of analysing narrative data, as became increasingly apparent through my critical reading of narrative research and literature. Riessman (2008) described narrative analysis as a process that is interdisciplinary by nature, thus allowing, and to some degree advocating, the mixing of methodological

approaches that may be underpinned by various theoretical perspectives. Furthermore, Squire et. al (2008) wrote about narrative approaches to research being non-prescriptive in the way stories are sought. Narrative does not specify whether to aim for objectivity or researcher and participant involvement; whether to analyse stories' particularly or generality; or what epistemological significance to attach to narratives (Squire et. al, 2008; p.1).

Ongoing references were made to the work of Riessman (2008) when seeking rigour in my chosen method of analysis. I aimed to give due consideration to both the structural and thematic elements to analysis. Riessman (2008) stated that researchers can explore narrative structure to varying degrees and that the analysis of this structure can be combined with alternative approaches, such as thematic narrative analysis. In my analysis of the narratives shared by participants, I aimed to focus primarily on the content of what was being shared, remaining conscious of keeping the narratives 'intact', rather than allowing them to be diluted in search of common themes across cases (Riessman, 2008). Despite this, following the analysis of individual narratives in a way that I felt was least disruptive to them, I sought general patterns across the five narratives. The purpose of this process was to simultaneously add rigour to the research whilst developing a sense of increased practical utility for educators and services working with refugees and asylum seekers.

Much of the current literature about qualitative approaches to research describes clear guidance for the analysis of qualitative data through approaches such as Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis and Grounded Theory (Squire et. al, 2008). However, as previously discussed, the process of analysing data in narrative research is significantly less prescriptive. Below, I have outlined the steps I took to analysing the narratives shared in this research.

### Step 1:

The audio-recorded narrative interviews were transcribed using approaches adopted from the work of Labov (1972) and Patterson (2008).

### Step 2:

The transcripts were ‘neatened’ to signify name changes to maintain anonymity, ensure clarity where there were pauses in speech and to add descriptors of significant changes in tones or body language. I used the following transcript symbols (adapted from Lieblich et al., 1998):

- Parentheses ( - ) addition of a description or explaining phase
- Asterisk \* signifies name change
- Ellipses ... signifies unclear and subsequently omitted speech
- (2) Signifies a pause for a number of seconds

It is perhaps pertinent to note that whilst much qualitative research uses processes of ‘tidying up’ narratives, adding missing words and even offering partial transcriptions to do this, I was conscious to minimise this process of ‘tidying up’ the narratives shared in this research. Although I recognised the complexity this would add when analysing the narratives, I aimed for my analysis to be as authentic and true to the narratives as possible. Given that for all the research participants, English was spoken as an additional language, I felt that the ‘messiness’ of the transcripts reflected the complexity and ‘messiness’ of the lives of the young people who came to the UK as refugees with little or no English language skills. Riessman (2008) highlights the importance of keeping narratives ‘intact’, and by keeping the narratives as unaltered as possible, I aimed to do this.

### Step 3:

I referred to Labov's (1972) approach to looking for sequences and structure within the narrative, to address my research questions. Labov's approach is described by Patterson (2008) as facilitating the identification and analysis of event narratives, thus being a useful method for the analysis of personal experiences. In his work, Labov (1972) described a 'fully formed' narratives as consisting of six key elements: An abstract (what is the story about?); orientation (when, where and who?); complicating action (what event/ complication then happened?); evaluation (the 'so what'); result/ resolution (what happened finally?); and a coda, which indicates that the story is finished.

I read the transcripts multiple times and sought the six key elements in each 'core narrative'. The six elements were colour-coded (see appendices E, F, G, H and I). With reference to my reading on Riessman (2008) and Patterson (2008), Labov's approach is summarised in the table below:

<b>Narrative Element</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<b>Abstract:</b> What is this story about?	Whilst not always present, it signals that the narrative is about to begin and can sometimes give an overview about the purpose of the narrative.
<b>Orientation:</b> The 'when?', 'where?' and 'who?' elements of the narrative.	The purpose of this orientation is to guide the listener to help him/ her identify context, time, place and key characters. The process of orientation usually takes place early on in the narrative, although orientating elements can re-emerge when additional stories emerge within the wider narrative.
<b>Complicating action:</b> What then happened?	The complicating action described in the narratives usually signals a significant event, turning point or problem. In some narratives, as was the case in some of the narratives shared in this research, there may be multiple complicating actions.
<b>Result/ resolution:</b> What finally happened?	This part of the narrative describes how the story or key event ended and was resolved. As will become apparent in the analysis

	of some of the narratives shared in this research, the resolution aspect is not as obvious or definite as Labov describes.
<b>Evaluation:</b> The ‘so what?’ element.	This element of narratives allows the narrator to reflect upon their feelings about the event or events. It is described by Riessman (2008) as the ‘soul of the narrative’. In my discussion, I will explore how and why this process of evaluation was seemingly more complex for some of the participants in this research.
<b>Coda:</b> How does the narrative end?	The coda usually signals that the story has ended, and in doing so brings both the listener and narrator back from the past world into the present.

It should be noted that not all five of the narratives shared in this research explicitly included all six elements as outlined by Labov. The ‘missing elements’ from Labov’s ideas of a narrative are discussed by Riessman (2008). It is further suggested by Jones (2001) this may be due narratives often involving elements of exaggeration, repetition and elaboration. In doing so, the narrator attempts to give the listener a sense of what the narrator was feeling at the time.

#### Step 4:

The transcript was read several times, including readings alongside the voice recording to note not only general ideas and themes, but also where the narrator emphasised particular themes or ideas. Recurring comments and ideas were noted and highlighted through a process of colour-coding.

#### Step 5:

Once individual narratives had been analysed for recurring ideas and themes, several ‘stories’ were identified within the different narratives; a collection of themes. A process of meaning-making took place to explore what was being told in each story. As previously



stated, all the research participants spoke English as an additional language, which may be a contributing factor to why many of the stories lacked some of the six elements outlined by Labov. However, it was felt that the key themes that emerged from the narrative held the significance of being stories within themselves.

#### Step 6:

A list of all the stories within each narrative was generated to help look for common or recurring stories or ideas across the five narratives. These are discussed in the discussion chapter of this thesis.

## Analysis

### Dahnish Rana's stories

When I met Dahnish, he was seventeen years old and had been living in the UK for one year and ten months. He shared with me an insight into his life and experiences as a boy who was born in Iraq, moved to Syria due to war in his home country, before coming to the UK. He spoke about violence, war and threat to his life in Syria and Iraq. In amongst this transition was several moves between Iraq, Syria, Kurdistan, Lebanon, Romania and Germany. Several themes emerged from his narrative from experiences, feelings, thoughts and perceptions he shared with me at various points.

Dahnish's narrative included his understanding of socio-political factors that influenced his experiences and led to him becoming a refugee. He also shared his experiences of briefly attending secondary school in the UK before starting college where he was studying English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), I.T and Maths. Dahnish described his social journey of resettling in the UK, including helping factors as well as the challenges brought about in facing racism and Islamophobia in his new community. His narrative ended with a discussion about his identity and future aspirations.

Story one: War, violence, threat to life and loss

1. War happened in Iraq, I was like... three or four, five years.
2. then they killed my uncle.
3. and they come to take my uncle and we don't know about them 'til now.
4. In 2006 we moving to Syria because they say the message for my dad WE WILL KILL YOU, WE WILL KILL YOUR FAMILY. (Raised voice)
5. After five year the war is happening in Syria as well.
6. We moving back to Iraq but Iraq same. There is no good, no safety.

I asked Dahnish to tell me about his background and what led to him coming to the UK. He shared with me details of war in Iraq, the murder of his paternal uncle and the kidnap of another uncle, which took place in front of him. Whilst sharing these emotive experiences, Dahnish appeared calm and contained. He then shared with me, on line four, a death threat his father received from his uncle's murderers, where there was a threat to kill Dahnish's family. This led to Dahnish and his family moving to Syria in 2006. He described how five years on, war broke out in Syria, leading him and his family to move back to Iraq, where violence remained commonplace. It appears that the primary driving force for significant moves in Dahnish's life was safety.

#### Story 2: Faith as a protective factor

7. He (Dahnish's\* father) pray to the God. The sujood to the God, to thank Him.
8. I say... the God... he will give you test... have you got sabr? What they call in English?... Patience.

After some difficult experiences, Dahnish made several references to faith and described how his faith helped him make sense of and come to terms with death. He explained how he felt his adverse experiences were a test from God; a test of 'sabr' (patience).

Additionally, he highlighted the importance of being grateful to God. On line eight, he described his father's immediate reaction to the news that his family could move to England. The importance of faith in Dahnish's life resurfaced later in his narrative, (in story seventeen) where he spoke passionately about the importance of challenging perceptions about Islam.

#### Story 3: The British dream

9. You and your family, will see good life and safe in England.
10. Good life... there is no racist, no terrorist, no war.

11. I want to go because I want to save my family and I want future for my kids and good future for my kids.

12. We feeling like... like (2) if we go to England, we need magic. This was dream. This was dream.

In story 3, Dahnish shared his perceptions of England prior to arriving. Some of these views were shaped by comments by a member of the UN Refugee Action team who described a 'good life' and England being 'safe'. Dahnish's interpretation of this was that in England there would be 'no racist, no terrorist, no war.' The tone in which Dahnish delivered his perceptions of England prior to arrival, indicated that the reality he would later go on to describe would be different. However, these perceptions led to Dahnish believing that life in the UK would be like a 'dream', a dream that required 'magic'. He described how his father saw this as an opportunity to save his family and have a good future for Dahnish and his siblings.

#### Story 4: The uncertain and unstable journey

13. They (Refugee Action) call my dad and say not today.

14. He (neighbour) say "what... what, you no going?" We say they call back and they say you are late, one week.

15. They do this for three time.

16. In this time, only me and my dad to Kurdistan. My mum and my brothers, they go to uncle house.

17. We go in Lebanon. We waiting for plane.

18. We go from Lebanon to Romania. We stay... ten days. Some people they stay six month.

19. After the ten or eleven days in Romania, we go to Germany.

After taking their next step on their journey to the UK, Dahnish and his family received a knock-back when they were told that there was a problem with them getting to Lebanon. After leaving their long-term, temporary home, and attempting to get to Lebanon with their belongings, they were forced to return home. This uncertainty continued with Dahnish and his family experiencing this three times in an attempt to get to Lebanon. After a half-day stop-over in Lebanon, Dahnish and his family made a refugee camp in Romania their temporary home. He described further uncertainty on arrival, sharing how some people he had met there had been there for six months with no guarantee of moving elsewhere.

Story four is a narrative of uncertainty and instability; a journey to the UK that from Dahnish's perspective had no set route, no timescales and a little-known 'dream' destination. His narrative suggests that dreams of safety and a better life for his family, were key driving forces to help them manage the uncertainty, knockbacks and difficult conditions they endured.

#### Story 5: Gratitude and feeling lucky

20. Where is my mum, where is dad? They are (2) But other people... they can't find their family because they gone.
21. I feeling good because some people my age or under or older they lost his family from the war.
22. Some people they lost their family when they kids. My story no like them.
23. I say my story is good, because I've got my family.
24. I know some people from Syria (2) His mother and father they dead from bomb(2) bomb.

In story five, we heard about Dahnish as a fifteen-year-old boy, making sense of the instability and threat to life that he and his family endured. A sense of maturity and gratitude came through, with Dahnish comparing his life experiences with those of others who he felt had endured worse. On line three, he describes how others have lost their family through war. On lines twenty-three and twenty-four of this story, he described his experience of meeting a young boy and girl whose parents were killed due to a bomb explosion. His repetition of the word bomb, with a pause as he looked to the floor, indicated the level of emotional impact this experience had on him.

#### Story 6: A child piecing together experiences

25. I not sure about this because I kid and I never ask my dad because no good for them.
26. I don't know... I was kid
27. But I know nothing about him because he gone... I don't know where he is.
28. I don't know anything because I can't speak English.

In story 6, Dahnish shared with me an insight into the added complexity of being a child who, struggled to make sense of his experiences. He described having limited information and understanding as well as little control over the events taking place in his life. In doing so, he demonstrated a sense of maturity. An example of this is on line twenty-eight, where Dahnish explained that he didn't ask his father many questions about what was happening, why it was happening, or with regard to Dahnish's uncle, because of the potential difficulties his dad may face in answering it. An additional barrier to him making sense of his experiences upon arrival in the UK was the language barrier he faced. Whilst he spoke elsewhere in his narrative about the support he received upon arrival in the UK, the language barrier appeared to be a barrier to not only the practical aspects of

resettling in the UK, but also the ability to make sense of his experiences as they were occurring.

#### Story 7: Poverty, desperation and isolation

29. They sell everything in the house to get money to go to the Syria because we haven't money good.

30. But we had no money because we were waiting for UN.

31. We need money to leave your son or we will kill him.

In story seven, Dahnish talked about the value of money; not in terms of material possessions, but rather its value in helping him come to the UK and potentially saving his life. He shared with me how his family sold their possessions to raise money to leave Iraq for Syria. He also described the threat of being held to ransom whilst in Iraq, sharing the experiences of people that he knew, who were held hostage with demands for large sums of money otherwise their son would be killed.

#### Story 8: Arriving in the UK: Immediate support and comfort

32. When we come, like... the Refugee Action, they come

33. They give the money the house, everything good, we saved.

34. Here the electric is twenty-four seven. In Syria there was only electric two or three... hour.

35. We come here everything is good, the powers, the taxis here.

36. We find here friends, school.

Dahnish shared a very positive story of the immediate support that he and his family received upon arrival in the UK. He described how they were given a house and some money, as well as talking about access to electricity and the use of taxis as privileges. His immediate response to my question about first arriving in the UK addressed descriptions

of very practical things such as shelter, money and necessities rather than his thoughts, feelings or perceptions of the environment.

#### Story 9: Sense of saviour and comfort

37. My daddy was crying. They ask him ‘why you are crying?’. He say because now I am saved.

38. There is no war, no someone trying to kill me or do anything to my kids like this...

In story nine, we hear about the sense of saviour felt by Dahnish’s father which was projected onto Dahnish and his family. Receiving the news about coming to the UK was described as a very emotive experience for the family. The UK was considered a safe haven and somewhere that would provide protection not only against war but also against the perceived danger from other civilians in Syria and Iraq.

#### Story 10: Overcoming the language barrier

39. In school, I got my friends to translate to me...

40. I no trying speaking in school because I got my friend to translate to me.

41. If you are with people from same country you can’t improve your English.

A recurring theme in Dahnish’s story was the importance of learning to speak and understand English, overcoming a significant barrier in communication and resettlement in the UK. He described an affinity towards other children of a similar background to him and thus befriended them very quickly. However, these new friends would then translate for him, making him less likely to need to learn to speak and understand English himself. Dahnish explained how being in the same classes as other Arabic speakers meant that he was unable to improve his English language skills.



### Story 11: Experiencing racism and Islamophobia

42. British kids... they was throw the snow at the window and they say we don't need like... you are Muslims, you are Pakistanis.
43. We don't need you... move from there.
44. He smoke and eat and put his rubbish in my garden.
45. My dad, he see one guy throw a can of beer at us.
46. The area we were living... some of the people... they were racist.
47. They hate Muslims because they think we are taking his money, we are taking his country.
48. He throw at us and say GO OUT FROM THERE and he was swearing.
49. He say you are Pakistani, we don't need you.... You are Muslim... Go out from this country.
50. They think Muslims no good... say we are terrorist, ISIS, kill people. That's what they are saying.

In story eleven, Dahnish described his experiences of racism and Islamophobia when he and his family arrived in the UK. This was the first story within Dahnish's narrative where he showed significant attempts at meaning-making and trying to make sense of his experiences. Whereas many of the other stories were descriptive in nature, Dahnish tried to make sense of why he and his family were receiving such abuse. He ascribed jibes for them to leave the neighbourhood and the country, to a hatred for Muslims and a perception that Muslims were taking the financial resources and inadvertently the country of British people. It is possible that his readiness to ascribe reason and meaning to these negative experiences may be an indication of Dahnish's pre-existing anxieties about racism and Islamophobia in the UK. However, these were not explicitly alluded to elsewhere in his narrative.

### Story 12: Reliance on authority figures for support

51. 'Why are you doing this? We are here for safe. I will call the police'.
52. They say 'fuck the police'. The police they can't do anything to me...
53. The refugee guy... say next time they do like that, call the police.
54. We call the police, we call Smalltown Home Support\*.
55. He say it's ok because the police will save us.... They come in two minute... five minute.
56. It's OK for me and my brothers not to worry. If anything happens, we'll call the police.

Dahnish demonstrated both a level of respect and reliance of authority figures through his narrative. In particular, he spoke about the role of the police in keeping him and his family safe, an idea that was reinforced by the local council department supporting them as well as by friends he had made. Dahnish was apologetic when quoting his neighbours who said 'fuck the police', indicating a level of respect towards me.

### Story 13: My neighbourhood and feeling safe

57. 'We think here is safe but here is not safe.'
58. You think it safe but it is not safe.
59. He throw at us and say GO OUT FROM THERE.
60. My friends, Arabic friends, British, they say this area is no good. Its racist and no good for people who come first time to this country.
61. On my street, they no good. They think Muslims no good... say we are terrorist, ISIS, kill people.
62. The area I live is not good... they hate people who come from another country, like African people, even Christian.

After describing his perception of the UK as a safe haven earlier in his narrative, in story thirteen, Dahnish contrasted this with the reality that he faced. On line fifty-seven, he quotes his dad as saying ‘we think here is safe, but here is not safe.’ Whilst there was perhaps not the real threat of war to deal with, disagreements with neighbours, verbal abuse and physical aggression served as a reminder of some of the civil conflict they faced in Syria. Dahnish formed an opinion on his neighbourhood both from his personal experiences and from the views of friends he was making, who described the area as ‘racist’ and ‘no good for people who come first time to this country’. Story thirteen included powerful statements about the area in which he was living, describing his neighbours as having hatred for people from other countries.

#### Story 14: Media and social media perceptions

63. Some people like Da’esh who cut people’s head... put it on YouTube and Facebook and Instagram like this, that’s why they think... that Islam is no good.
64. If they go to read about Islam and search about Islam, they find that it is about saving the people and not for the kill.
65. The people only see this video, but they don’t see the good things about the Muslims.

When asked about how he feels refugees are perceived in the media, Dahnish described the perception negatively. He felt particularly strongly that people had a negative view of Islam and Muslims, owing partly to propaganda videos posted by extremist groups like Da’esh. He felt that this skewed the dialogue around Islam as these videos were so emotive, thus detracting from what he described as ‘the good things about Muslims’.

#### Story 15: Reflection on experiences in education.

66. They didn’t know anything about me.

67. When I was studying at Smalltown\* Academy, I don't know anything because I can't speak English.
68. I had no book, anything... maybe just a pen like this
69. I don't know anything what they doing or what they trying to teach me.
70. This happen every day... one month....
71. Then I understand this country.
72. In college, they teach you to get a job in the future.
73. If you pass the exam, you will get a good job like this.
74. In the college, you talk about your future, like this. How you can get a job, how you can go to university.

Dahnish's narrative contained some positive undertones about education and his experiences of school. However, when further questioned, he described how he felt that the school knew nothing about him. His expression and tone of voice indicated a sense of disappointment in their lack of interest in him as a person, his story and his needs. He explained how simultaneously, he felt confused by his early school experiences in the UK as he did not know what was happening around him and why. He described feeling this lack of agency every day for a prolonged period of time before he could eventually 'understand this country', referring to systems, processes and basics of language.

Dahnish's experiences of college are described more positively, where the focus was on future aspirations and getting a job. This more targeted approach to education with real-life relevance appeared to work well in terms of engaging Dahnish in his education.

#### Story 16: Socio-political factors

75. I say I come from Iraq and Syria.

76. (Saddam Hussein) He was trying to save his country, but other countries don't need him because they want to steal like oil and gold from him.
77. In 2003, I was three years... the Iraq was gone...
78. I say I'm Iraqi... it's a strong country. 'til now we try to save the country.
79. They kill him because he was trying to save all the Arab people.
80. Before in Iraq was safe. Everyone, like the Shia, Sunni, Christian, was like a family.

Dahnish demonstrated a mature understanding of socio-political factors that led to him and his family seeking refuge in Syria before coming to the UK as refugees. As well as sharing with me his sense of belonging to both Iraq and Syria, he described views about former Iraq leader Saddam Hussein and the motives behind the 2003 war in Iraq. Dahnish demonstrated confidence and pride in speaking positively about Saddam Hussein and contrary to British parliamentary explanations for the war in Iraq, Dahnish felt that the war was fought because other countries wanted to steal oil and gold from Iraq. Dahnish appeared very passionate when sharing this and demonstrated a level of disappointment in how his home country has been exploited. This was particularly evident on line eighty, when he described how prior to the war, the diverse religious communities of Iraq were 'like a family'.

Story 17: Identity and how its shaped by experience

81. I am Iraqi guy and I can say I'm Iraqi and Syrian. I lived in Syria for ten years.
82. I can't forget about this because they saved me and saved my family.
83. I say I come from Iraq and Syria.
84. If I was in my country, maybe I would have died some day or next day.

85. When I finish the uni, I want to find work in an Arabic country like Dubai, Abu Dhabi... Saudi Arabia.
86. Because here I can't say this is my family with British people because sometimes I try to talk with someone, he think I am a terrorist, I am trying to hurt him and he will move away from me.
87. You know what happened in Manchester... It was a Muslim, but he was born here. He was a British guy with British passport. I don't know why he do that.
88. When this happened, my dad he called me and told me to come early home because maybe British people will kill you.
89. J: Do you feel British at all?
- D: I'm British? No... [D smiles and shakes his head].
- J: Do you think anything could make you feel more British?
- D: No, because when I try to say I am British, they say you are not British... like this. That's what they try to say.
- J: Who is 'they'?
- D: Oh... Everyone.
90. J: Is there anything that you think would help you to feel more British?
- D: Yes... when I get a British passport [D laughs].
91. He say you will find British people... the good British people... the original British people. Not here like racist... they hating Muslim. In Torquay you will be happy.

In story seventeen, Dahnish spoke passionately about his identity as an Iraqi and a Syrian. When identifying himself as Syrian, he showed gratitude for how the country saved him and his family during war in Iraq. He went on to describe how he was in the UK to find

safety. However, Dahnish was clear that despite seeking refuge in the UK, he did not identify himself as British. When I tried to explore the reasons for this, Dahnish shared with me that when he tried to say that he was British and adopt a British identity to some degree, people around him refused to accept this as his identity. When asked if anything could make him feel more British, he jokingly responded by saying ‘when I get a British passport’.

On lines eighty-seven and eighty-eight, he explained how the terrorist attack in Manchester in 2017 created further tensions and barriers between the Muslim community, an identity he strongly assigns himself to, and the general British public. He described how events like this make people feel that all Muslims are terrorists. He then explained how his father felt there was a risk of a potential backlash following the attack, so asked him to come home in case he was killed in retaliation.

Story 18: Aspirations:

92. I want to be in the future, a doctor.

93. I tell him OK... when I will be eighteen, I will go move... I will go live there.

94. When I finish the uni, I want to find work in an Arabic country.

95. Yeah because in an Arab country, they respect you.

In his final story, Dahnish described his aspirations for the future. These aspirations included academic and professional aspirations to work as a doctor, as well as aspirations to move away from what he described as a ‘racist’ area. He described how a friend of his who lives in Torquay told him that it is a nicer area with ‘original British people’. However, Dahnish’s long-term goal is to live in the Middle-East, where he seeks a professional job and respect, something that he feared he would not achieve here in the UK.

### Nadeem Yusra's Stories

Nadeem was aged fifteen when I met him and was a year 11 pupil at Islamia Academy. He had been living in the UK for little over two years. He told me that he was born in Ethiopia but later questioned whether this was true. Nadeem came across as unsure about his background and reasons that led to him coming to the UK. Nadeem appeared shy and somewhat reserved when we first met. As he shared more of his narrative, his responses to questions became more in-depth, with him using humour at times and engaging more interactively with me.

Nadeem described several complicating actions through his narrative including experiences of bullying and language barriers. His narrative also included some evaluative statements on his experiences, although many of these were in response to direct questioning from myself. However, Nadeem was unwilling to share details of some of the difficulties his family faced in Ethiopia. Overall, ten stories emerged from his narrative.

#### Story one: My background

- 1) I was born in Ethiopia. I went by car to Egypt. Then from Egypt, I went to a refugee camp and then I came by aeroplane in England.
- 2) We had to go there and tell our stories because they said we had to tell our stories to go to England.
- 3) My mum is from Eritrea. I'm not sure if I was born in Ethiopia. It might be Eritrea... I didn't ask my mum.
- 4) My mum said there was a problem. She didn't say why... I didn't ask her because I was a kid.



Nadeem's first story emerged when he was asked to tell me about himself. He started by giving an account that appeared very factual, using short, concrete sentences to explain his place of birth and physical journey to the UK. He then questioned whether he was born in Ethiopia or Eritrea, where his mother was born. On line three, he states that he has not asked his mother. This concept of not asking his mother or questioning her instructions, was a recurring theme throughout Nadeem's narrative. When asked about the reasons for his family needing to leave Africa to come to the UK, he explained that his mother told him that there was a problem; something he did not question. Nadeem attributed not asking many questions to the fact he was a child. This idea indicated a lack of child-voice or child-participation in guiding his life choices and experiences.

Nadeem explains on lines one and two that his family left Ethiopia for Egypt, where he spent some time with his aunty, before living in a refugee camp. He described his experiences of having to 'tell his story', something that he felt was a potential hurdle to him and his family coming to England. This is likely to have caused some anxiety, to ensure that the stories he described matched those being told by his other family members.

#### Story two: Dealing with bullying

- 5) I didn't know English. People tried to bully me and other people who didn't know English.
- 6) Some of the people you think are friends might help you, but some might bully you.
- 7) ...after two or three months, a guy tried to bully me, but I fought back.
- 8) It's just teachers... when you want to say something, they don't take you seriously.

9) They should take small things more seriously because small things start big fights.

10) There was an argument and they said, 'you're a refugee... what are you gonna do?' My friends... they said 'refugees or not, we're still people. Why are you behaving like that?'

Nadeem described his experiences of bullying in story two. Interestingly, he attributed some of this to his poor English language skills, explaining how others would misinterpret when he spoke in his preferred language, leading to disagreements and negative consequences from school staff. His difficulties with communicating in English and potential consequences of speaking in his preferred language, placed Nadeem in a position of vulnerability. On line six, Nadeem also described social learning experiences in terms of developing friendships. He developed trusting relationships with some fellow school pupils who went on to bully him.

On line eight, Nadeem described how he felt his opinion or point of view was not taken on board by school staff. He described a sense of being let down by school authority figures that he relied on for support, claiming that they did not take his concerns seriously. On line ten, Nadeem spoke about an experience he had in his local town centre where during an argument, Nadeem and his friends were perceived as weak due to being refugees and therefore not being able to retaliate.

Story three: Language barrier complications

11) First is Eritrean. The second one is Ethiopian. The third one is Arabic. The fourth one is English.

12) ...Now there's a new guy who doesn't fight back... He doesn't know English, so they push him about.

13) Do you know my friend's school... Islamia Academy\*? When he went there, they gave him a tablet so everything they said he was typing it in Google, so it would just translate, and he'd show the teacher. But me (2) they didn't give me anything, so I was sitting there just shaking my head if I know anything or not.

In story three, Nadeem shared with me some of the complications caused by language. He described English as his fourth language, the one he has had to learn most recently. As discussed in story two, Nadeem attributes some of the bullying he faced to the difficulties he had with expressing himself in English. On line twelve, he describes how a not being able to speak English reduces confidence in standing up for yourself if you are being bullied. In relation to more formal learning, Nadeem shared an example of a friend of his at another school who had access to a tablet device to allow him to translate what he was hearing and learning through Google programming. In this story, he indicates that this would be something that Nadeem would have found useful.

There appears to be a sense of lacking confidence in Nadeem asking for things to be repeated or reframed, rather shaking his head, giving the impression that he has understood. Through Nadeem's narrative, I interpreted that the use of the English language was intertwined with Nadeem's confidence; both in terms of his confidence as a learner and his confidence to stand up to bullying.

Story four: My journey to the UK

14) We didn't have the money to come here. So, we had to go to these people who ask about your story and they research if it's true.

15) J: Do you want to tell me some of that story?

N: No.

16) Yeah... after the story, it took three years for them to let us come to England.

In story four, Nadeem gave a brief insight into his journey to the UK. He described a complicating factor that involved financial troubles but did not give details regarding this. On line twelve, he shared with me his experience of 'telling his story'. His previous experience of storytelling carried with it significant implications, with it being checked for authenticity. He directly correlated his storytelling to the potential to come to the UK and have a house to live in. Nadeem was not comfortable sharing some of those stories with me, despite my attempts to explore his background further. On line sixteen, he explained that after telling his story to refugee agencies, with the hope of coming to the UK or going to America, there was a three-year waiting period before their application was accepted. Taking this into consideration, I felt that Nadeem may have been conscious of the potential implications of re-telling his background story to a stranger, particularly if it differed from the stories he had shared before. Additionally, in my analysis of story five, we explore some of the challenges involved in Nadeem discussing his past. However, he was more forthcoming in describing his life in the UK and the experiences he has had here.

#### Story five: Making sense of my story

17) It was hard for my mum. We don't talk about it because my mum doesn't want to talk about it.

18) I just talk about now and when I came to England.

19) Because the past was hard and sometimes you want to forget it.

20) The hardest part was me changing a lot of houses, making new friends and then changing to other houses. I didn't know (2) I was just a kid. didn't ask why.

In story five, we see the description of an interesting dynamic in Nadeem's family. He explained how his past has been difficult, particularly for this mother, leading him not to

ask her many questions about their past in an attempt to forget about it. As well as taking on this protectionist role, on line twenty, he described how he went along with what his mother said, not questioning what was happening. Nadeem describes himself as a 'kid', thus having little influence on, or need to be involved in, mapping their future at the time.

One of the key factors described on line twenty, is the lack of stability in Nadeem's life, including house changes and the loss of friends. However, I felt that one of the barriers to Nadeem making sense of his background and narrative, is his inability to talk about it, owing partly to his difficulties with engaging his mother in discussions about it.

Story six: Sense of belonging and people like me

21) N: No. because we might move again.

22) J: What would you say felt like home?

N: I'd say my country because I had friends since childhood there.

23) Through Facebook. Some of them told me that some of them died.

24) Yeah (2) I can't have friends that I call real friends. There's no point making real friends if you know you're going to move one day.

25) They have the same story like me. They were refugees in Egypt.

26) Yeah... it's not the same same, but they had the same hard life as me. They changed lots of houses, they were refugees like me. Their story is like mine.

27) With them, I can say the truth because they have the same story as me.

Nadeem and I explored the idea of belonging, where a story about belonging physically and belonging emotionally emerged. On lines twenty-one and twenty-four, he described an emotional disconnect from his life in the UK. Nadeem appeared to distance himself from developing meaningful friendships, attributing this to an expectation that he will need to move away from the area in the future. On line twenty-three, he shared with me

the news of the death of some of his friends in Egypt, something that appeared to exacerbate his view of friendships being temporary.

On lines twenty-five to twenty-seven, Nadeem described an affiliation to other young people who he described as having a similar story to himself. The friendships he spoke about with people locally, were with other refugees. On line twenty-six, he recognised that whilst their stories were unique, describing them as “not the same same”, he felt that they similar to his. He described being able to be his true self and “say the truth” around them. The importance of Nadeem having opportunities to meet other people to whom they felt an affinity, appeared to serve both a therapeutic and social purpose.

#### Story seven: Perceptions and treatment of refugees

28) In this school, if I say I’m a refugee, some of them make fun of it. Some of them say he’s a refugee so he’s dumb.

29) More people want to help you but if you have an argument with them, they will then turn and say you’re a refugee.

30) If I have a fight with them... or like an argument, they say ‘you’re a refugee... what are you gonna do?’

31) But some of them they try to help but then they go and tell other people that I’m poor and all of that. Thank you for the help but I can buy it. I ain’t poor. I now have money.

32) Some of them say you’re a refugee and all that... you’re here to take our jobs and all that but some of them say you’re a refugee and they try to help you. Some of them try to help you but they make it harder because they tell everyone.

33) They said, ‘you’re a refugee... what are you gonna do?’ My friends... said ‘refugees or not, we’re still people. Why are you behaving like that?’

34) Some of them think that refugees couldn't live in their own countries. So, they came to find a new life in this country. Some of them say like they're taking our space.

Story seven explored how Nadeem felt others perceived refugees, both in terms of his personal experiences and what he felt were wider perceptions across the UK. At the beginning of this story, he shared with me how he was sometimes mocked in school for being a refugee and how some peers at school correlated this to him therefore being unintelligent. He also described how some of his peers assumed that he is poor, leading him to develop a sense of frustration, and to state that he has money to buy things for himself. On lines thirty-one and thirty-two, Nadeem shared that attempts to help him could be counterproductive as those that helped him would often tell others about it or label him as poor and in need of support. Being positioned as such appeared to make Nadeem uncomfortable, leading him to reject the label of being poor or needy.

Nadeem went on to share an experience of being involved in an altercation in his local town centre. On line thirty-three, he described how the other party positioned Nadeem and his friends as powerless, leading to his friend interpreting this as a dehumanising experience. When asked about wider perception of refugees in the UK, Nadeem felt that there were a range of opinions, guided by people's thought processes. The first opinion he described positioned refugees as being forced from their home countries and thus in need of rehousing and support. The second positioned them as unwelcome, taking over British 'space' or land, inferring that they are not welcome or entitled to be in the UK.

Story eight: My sense of identity

35) I'm a normal fifteen-year-old boy. Just having fun and enjoying life. Nobody knows when you're going to die so you need to have fun when you can.

36) If someone wants to describe me, he can say he's a 15-year-old boy. He's a refugee, he came from Ethiopia and he's in England now. The first thing is that I'm a refugee here and I ain't scared of that. It depends how people say it.

37) I'm Christian but when we go to Church, there's an Ethiopian church in Manchester we go to on Sundays.

In story eight, Nadeem described himself as a 'normal fifteen-year-old-boy', with a desire to enjoy life. I got a sense that his early difficult experiences and risk to life in Ethiopia had been a contributing factor to him adopting the mentality that fun should be had as death could be upon you at any time. On line thirty-six, he demonstrated a sense of pride in being a refugee. However, when considering the experiences of prejudice that he described earlier in his narrative, his fearless attitude toward the refugee identity could be attributed to taking ownership of the label, thus better managing the stigma attached to being a refugee.

Nadeem also described a religious identity, sharing that being a Christian was an important part of his identity. His family travel out of town to feel a part of an Ethiopian church, owing partly to the difficulty that his mother has with communicating in English. When asked about Britishness, Nadeem did not identify with having a British identity or a desire to in the future. In story ten of his narrative where he shared his future aspirations, Nadeem's sense of belonging to Ethiopia and an Ethiopian identity re-emerged.

Story nine: Helping factors and support

38) I don't think they're relatives but they're from Ethiopia and they helped us when we came here. The guy who was supposed to help us, she just showed us the shop, got us a bank and that's it... The guy was supposed to take care of us.

39) My friends, the people I hang around with and the people who helped me.



40) It would help if there was somebody from the same country in their school because they will help them.

41) My sister knew some English so anything I wanted, I would just tell my sister.

Story nine emerged when Nadeem was asked about the helping and supporting factors in his resettlement in the UK. There were two ideas that emerged in this theme: language and familiarity. He described how it was useful to have a family member who could speak English as well as friends who could translate for him. The second helping factor was having friends and friends of the family from a similar cultural background who were settled in the UK, having lived here for several years. It allowed for Nadeem and his family to ask some of the more complex questions without fear of judgement. Nadeem also felt it would be helpful for new arrivals to the country to have somebody of the same country of origin at the school. This appeared to be a reflection of the additional help he received from peers who had a similar cultural background to him and thus perhaps a more enhanced understanding of his background and needs.

Story ten: My future and aspirations

42) All I think about is being an engineer because that was my dream since I was a kid. If I made it, I would build my mum a house in Ethiopia.

43) She'd want to be with her family. She didn't see them for like five years.

44) I think she would, but I don't think she can.

45) If the government lets her, she might do it... I don't think they'll let us go back.

46) There might be problems that mean I need to move.

47) Maybe visit or maybe marry an Ethiopian woman and stay there.

Story ten starts by Nadeem describing his career aspirations, describing it as a childhood dream. Much of his future aspirations centred around his mother's needs and attempts to

make his mother happy. Earlier in his narrative, he described how he would not ask his mother questions about his past as she found it difficult to talk about. Whilst Nadeem did not allude to the specific complications that led to him coming to the UK, he states that he would go back to Ethiopia if the government allowed his mother to return. On line forty-six, Nadeem indicates that he does not feel a true sense of belonging to any place, sharing that unforeseen problems may mean that he would have no option but to move.

### Emile Tauba's Stories

I met Emile when he was aged sixteen and had been living in the UK for two years. He comes from a Sudanese family but was born in Egypt, after his family fled war in Sudan. One of Emile's most detailed stories from within his narrative was about identity. I was therefore keen to explore various facets of this. Emile was in year 11 at a local Islamic School, one that has an almost exclusively Muslim population, despite Emile and his family identifying as Christian.

Emile's narrative included a short and factual abstract, several orientating and complicating factors, but little evaluation of his experiences. It became apparent through our discussions that Emile struggled to give a detailed narrative in English. On several occasions, he required prompts following open questions, as well as requiring some questions to be reframed for him. The minimal detail in his narrative made the analysis more complex. Despite this, six stories emerged from his narrative.

#### Story one: Personal details and background

1. My name's Emile Tauba. I'm sixteen years old. I live in Smalltown\*. I come to Islamia Academy School\*.
2. My family come from Sudan to Egypt. I born in Egypt.
3. Because war... war in Sudan.
4. Yes, I have one brother and sister.

In story one, Emile was asked to tell me about himself and his background. He shared a very factual account, including his name, age, town in which he lives and the school that he attends. As I learned from other participants in this research as well as my reading around cultural repertoires surrounding narratives (Elliott, 2005), young refugees' experiences of interview-style situations are often fact-sharing processes that could

determine whether or not your family are able to come the UK. I felt that this could be one of the factors that meant Emile's narrative appeared so factual. Taking this into consideration along with the language barrier discussed above, I aimed to develop a more trusting, 'safe place to stand' (Ncube, 2006) through developing rapport prior to starting to the recording as well as by asking questions not directly related to the research questions.

Emile explained that whilst he was born in Egypt, his family come from Sudan; a country that they left due to war. It is perhaps pertinent to note that whilst Emile shared little detail about his pre-migration experiences, Sudan's Christian population has an interesting and complex history. Emile's family left Sudan prior to Sudan being split into two countries, leading to the independence of Christian-majority South Sudan. Much of the former Northern parts of Sudan's Christian population were refugees from the South. I feel this is relevant as Emile lived as a refugee in Egypt for fourteen years before coming to the UK as a refugee. This becomes relevant once again in story five, where Emile talks about his sense of identity.

#### Story two: Experiencing and dealing with racism

5. E: It was good like... but there was a little bit of racism in there.
6. They say you're black and stuff like that.
7. E: Yes... Like they swearing at us innit. They say the 'N' word and things.
8. J: And what would you do if people called you the 'N' word or other things?  
E: Just leave them.
9. J: How did that feel?  
E: I feel bad.

When asked about what life was like in Egypt, Emile described it as ‘good’, but immediately went on to explain that he experienced racism there. Emile shared little else about the fourteen years of his life that he spent in Egypt, indicating that his experience of racism had a significant impact on his life there. On line twelve in story three, Emile spoke about his expectations of what the UK would be like, where he described how he thought it would be “maybe good than Egypt.” However, on line seven, Emile shared how he faced similar racism when he arrived in the UK. He described being sworn at and being called “the ‘N’ word”,

There appeared to be an undertone of immunity to experiencing racism in Emile’s story. When asked what he would do when verbally abused, he replied “just leave them”. He also told me that he did not share these experiences with anybody, despite how it made him feel. This indicated a sense of helplessness and acceptance that racial abuse is something that he should expect and learn to accept.

Story three: My first impressions of the UK

10. I feel like happy... yeah.

11. New country. New people.... Maybe good than Egypt.

12. J: had you heard a lot about the UK before?

E: Yeah but not too much.

E: Good things.

13. Good (1) like (1) it’s good like (2) it’s different, innit.

14. We went by taxi to home and I was so happy when I come here. First time I travel by plane.

In story three, Emile was asked about how it felt to hear that he would be coming to the UK. He described a sense of happiness and optimism about coming to a new country and

meeting new people. Some of this optimism came from having heard positive things about the UK, although he did not specify where this positive perspective came from. Emile described himself as being ‘so happy’ when he came to the UK. In telling this story, he indicates that some of the happiness could be attributed to the excitement surrounding his physical journey, as it was the first time that he had travelled by aeroplane. Upon arrival, Emile had positive initial impressions of the UK, despite it being different to the environment he was used to.

#### Story four: Settling into and the language barrier

15. J: What was that like?

E: Good... tidy.

16. Yes... they were people who help me.

17. They were showing us the way, the places.

18. They showed us how to deal with people.

19. First it was hard because I didn’t have English, so I couldn’t speak with people.

20. J: Has it become easier now that you can speak English?

E: Yeah

Emile appeared to settle in to life in the UK with relative ease. He was pleased with the accommodation offered to him and his family, pointing out that it was ‘tidy’. When asked about the support he received upon arrival in the UK, he struggled to articulate the roles of those that supported him and the support they offered. However, he described how they helped his family navigate around the area, presumably including key places of interest to them, as well as helping to find a school for Emile to attend. Emile also shared that he was shown “how to deal with people”. This idea of being advised on how to interact with others was also shared in other narratives and will be something that it discussed later in

the cross-narrative analysis. In amongst these changes, Emile described how not being able to speak English was a barrier to him settling, particularly in relation to developing friendships; something that became easier as his confidence in communicating in English grew.

#### Story five: My identity

21. I'd say my identity (1) like my name is Emile Tauba. I come from a Christian family. I used to live in Egypt but I'm from Sudan originally. I live in Smalltown\*. I come to Islamia Academy\*. I'm in year 11... doing my GCSEs.

22. E: I feel like I'm Sudanese.

23. J: Do you feel British at all?

E: No.

24. J: What do you think would make you feel more British?

E: English...

J: Learning to speak English a little better?

E: Yeah.

25. J: You said you are from a Christian family. Is that important to you?

E: Yeah.

E: It feel like easy because in Egypt, my friends all were Islam, so I don't feel like something different.

26. J: Do you think it's easier for you to come to a school like this where there are pupils from Muslim backgrounds or would it have been easier to go to a school with mainly White British or Christian students?

E: Muslim.

27. J: OK. Do you like talking about your background?

E: I can say it to people.

28. Do you want to remember the fact that you are a refugee?

E: I want to remember.

Story five emerged when I looked to explore Emile's sense of identity. Emile was unsure what I meant by this, leading me to explain and give an example of my identity. I am conscious that the way in which I described my identity is likely to have influenced the aspects of his identity that Emile subsequently chose to share. Emile's description of his identity, in line with his wider narrative, appeared factual and focused. He told me his name, his religious background, ethnic heritage, place of birth and school that he attended.

Emile described himself as feeling Sudanese, despite never having lived there. This could be attributed to Emile's experiences of having spent his life as a refugee in Egypt and now a refugee in the UK. As such, he demonstrated no explicit sense of belonging to either place. I feel that Emile may have felt further distanced from identifying as Egyptian or British due to his experiences of racism, that may have distanced him from indigenous communities, and thus affecting his sense of belonging to either country. On line twenty-four, Emile also identified language as a barrier to him feeling more British, sharing with me that learning to speak English better would help him feel more British. However, this part of the narrative came following closed questions from myself, encouraging Emile to identify factors that would make him feel more British. I felt that Emile exhibited no desire to be British and felt little need to assimilate to those who identify as British. Furthermore, on line twenty-eight, Emile talks about the importance of remembering that being a refugee is a part of his identity, although he struggled to articulate why he felt this.



Emile identified himself as Christian and saw this as an important part of his identity. I was therefore interested to explore his views on being one of very few Christian pupils at an Islamic school with an Islamic ethos. I felt that this would be particularly interesting due to the complex history of Christian-Muslim tensions in Sudan, a country that Emile identifies with. On line twenty-five, Emile described a sense of ease and contentment as all his friends in Egypt were Muslim. He also shared with me that he thought it was easier to come to a school with a large Muslim population, owing to his familiarity with being taught in such an environment.

#### Story six: My future

29. When I grow up? I want to be an engineer.

30. Like building and construction.

31. E: Somewhere else.

J: Where can you imagine yourself living?

E: Maybe in England but not in Smalltown\*.

32. E: When I grow up, to go to work, work in buildings.

Story six emerged when Emile was asked about his aspirations for the future. He shared some mature aspirations, including a career in engineering in the construction trade.

Whilst he could foresee a future for himself in the UK, he did not wish to spend his adult life in his current town of residence. Emile further aspired to own his own house in the future; something that may enhance his feeling of belonging and settlement in the UK.

### Kaiser Sana Gulrauz's Stories

I met Kaiser when he was sixteen years old and had been living in the UK for little over two years. Kaiser comes from Somalia and now lives with his mother, brother and sister in a large town in the North of England. Kaiser shared an insight into a difficult life in Somalia and spoke about the threat of violence, bombs and fighting, all of which he described as unpredictable. He described a sense of excitement about coming to the UK, but also spoke how he used self-talk to manage some of his anxieties about coming to the UK.

It should be recognised that Kaiser's spoken English language skills were emerging. This is likely to be a contributing factor to Kaiser often giving very closed answers and requiring prompting and scaffolding of questions. Through this process of co-creating a narrative, six stories emerged.

#### Story one: My background

- 1) I come from Somalia and I come here with my family and also, I am happy here to stay.
- 2) Life in Somalia it was hard. It's hard how to learn and every time like something happen, you can't know when something gonna happen to you (1) all that.
- 3) Like it might happen fire... or the bomb. It might happen fight (2) all that.
- 4) J: Did you feel safe in Somalia?

K: No.

The first story in Kaiser's narrative briefly described his background and some of the reasoning behind him and his family leaving Somalia. I found the first line of his narrative particularly interesting, when Kaiser told me in a very formal manner that he was happy to stay in the UK. I felt that this was influenced by the experiences that most

refugees have of being asked about their background. This is often a process used by refugee agencies to ascertain whether applications for coming to the UK are genuine and to sometimes ascertain their views about the country.

Kaiser described a difficult life in Somalia that included unpredictable threats to life from fighting, fires and bombs. Kaiser's description of not feeling safe, if related to research such as that of Maslow, offers an explanation as to why he struggled with some of the more challenging questions about his sense of self and identity. Additionally, the impact of this on his access to learning was something that came through very early on in his narrative. The importance of access to education and positive learning experiences was a recurring theme in his narrative, as discussed in story four.

#### Story two: The British dream

- 5) K: I feel happy and ... and I say like your life is gonna be changed... all that.
- 6) My mum, she says to me that.
- 7) ...and UK is more safer than Somalia.
- 8) I imagine like... it's gonna be good... and it still is good.
- 9) I was feeling a bit sad and I was saying like, you're gonna see new people, different people, different life, all that.
- 10) I miss my people over there, but I say I have to focus here.
- 11) Yeah, it's a big difference to Somalia. The houses are all different. I said like 'wow, we found a good house, good life' ... all that. It was a big difference.
- 12) K: It would be like... different. A good life and safety and all that.

In story two, Kaiser started by describing his perceptions of the UK prior to him arriving. I have named the story 'The British dream' as Kaiser described a sense of happiness upon hearing the news of him coming to the UK as well as him describing it as somewhere

with life-changing opportunities and safety for him. On lines nine and ten, he gave an indication of some of his anxieties about coming to the UK, in terms of missing people that he knew in Somalia and the prospect of everything being new, and unfamiliar to him. He described using self-talk methods to reassure himself and focus on his future life in the UK.

Kaiser was keen at several points in his narrative to reassure me that he is happy living in the UK, demonstrating a sense of gratitude through his story-telling. When sharing the views he held about the UK prior to arriving, influenced partly by his mother's viewpoint, he was keen to tell me that he is happy living in the UK. Whilst this was pleasing to hear from a personal perspective, his insistence on telling me that he is happy to stay in the UK and the points at which this was shared through our discussion, indicated that Kaiser may have felt there was an ulterior motive to me asking him questions.

Story three: Help when we arrived

13) K: The social (1) w...

J: Social workers?

K: Yeah.

14) Helping like how to go shopping... all that, how to talk to the people and how the people they are. They were telling us all that.

15) The rule... how to talk to the neighbour... all that.

16) They was good.

17) J: Were they helpful? Did they help you?

K: Yeah.

J: What sort of things were they helping you with?

K: They helping us how to go everything, how to go shop... they tell us don't shout because the neighbours might get angry, upset and call the police.

Kaiser shared that he received support on arrival from people he described as social workers. Much of that support was for practical things such as shopping. However, he also explained how they supported him and his family with knowing how to talk to others and some of the subtler nuances of British life. Interestingly, he described what he labelled 'rules' of speaking to his neighbours. He shared similar experiences of engaging with his neighbours who supported him with practical things such as accessing local shops. However, they also advised Kaiser's family of what not to do, to avoid upsetting other neighbours. This appeared to have been interpreted as somewhat of a rule book by Kaiser, with him demonstrating a sense of obedience due to fear of angering neighbours, resulting in them calling the police.

#### Story four: My experiences of British schooling

18) I was happy and I was saying like (1) you can learn something. There it was... if you mess about, the teacher will hit you but it's not here. You have to focus and no one is gonna hit you... and the teachers they was good... very good.

19) J: Did the teachers help you to learn the language as well?

K: Yeah.

20) J: Do you think the teachers knew much about your background?

K: No.

21) J: Do you wish that the teachers did know more about your background?

K: Yeah.

22) J: What sort of things would you have wanted to tell me about your background and what's important to you?

K: First of all, I will tell you where I come from and I come here to learn. Yeah.

23) First time we come, we speak Somali but the teachers they say when you go home, don't speak Somali, try to speak English.

24) They could help me a lot with how to learn English.

25) It's gonna be hard for them. Like... I tell them how to talk to the neighbour, the rule... everything... the different people.

26) Like the people... when they are talking to people, they have to give them respect. They have to say please and something. They don't fight. If someone is bullying you, they have to ignore them.

As previously mentioned, the importance of learning was a recurring theme in Kaiser's narrative. On line eighteen, Kaiser explains one of the key differences between schooling in the UK and schooling in Somalia. He described how teachers in Somalia would hit you if you 'mess about', whereas that threat of physical force being used by teachers did not exist in UK schools. As such, he went on to explain how as a pupil in the UK, you were expected to be more independent in being able to focus. His overall perception of teachers in the UK was positive, although he was able to pick out what more they could have done to support him. One of the key things he found most useful was support from teachers to help him learn the English language. However, he felt that it would have been useful for school staff to have spent some more time to get to know him. When asked what he would have wanted to share with them, Kaiser described how he would want to share details of his background as well as his passion for learning. Additionally, he would have appreciated more support from school staff to help him learn English.

When prompted, Kaiser was able to offer some advice to other people in a similar situation to himself. On line twenty-five, he shared that the process of starting a UK school as a young refugee will be a difficult process. He once again used the term 'rules'

when explaining how to interact with others. On line twenty-six, Kaiser also talked about the importance of respecting others when engaging in conversation, as well as the subtleties of the English language such as the word 'please'. In line with his narrative, his interpretation of what is important for new, young refugees coming to the UK, followed a formal format that was driven by social rules. Interestingly, the sense of obedience and conformity resurfaced in this story, with Kaiser advising how if somebody is bullying you, as a young refugee, you should ignore this.

#### Story five: My identity

27) K: Basically, I am Kaiser... my identity from Somalia. I come here to learn with my family, all that (1) and we had a good life and we still got a good life.

28) K: Somalia.

29) J: Do you think you'll always feel Somali or do you think you might start to feel British?

K: Probably Somali.

30) A religious family... Muslim.

31) J: Erm... do you have a Muslim community where you live? Do you live near Muslim people?

K: Yeah.

32) They think refugee is like poor people and like they don't have anything, and they leave their country for safety to come here.... All that.

33) Because same me... there will be a lot of Muslim people around here. I wanna see them.

34) J: If you're a refugee from a Muslim family, do you think it helps to come to a Muslim school?

K: Yeah.

In story five, Kaiser was asked questions about his identity; a term that he did not understand and for which he required some explanation from me. On line twenty-seven, he almost regurgitated his opening narrative sentence where he mentions his name and country of birth, before reassuring me, the listener, that he is content with his 'good life' in the UK. However, Kaiser continues to identify as being very much Somali, with him not being able to foresee himself adopting a British identity. Kaiser also described being Muslim as an important part of his identity. On line thirty-three, he explained an appreciation for being housed and schooled in an area with a relatively large Muslim population. As this is an important part of his identity, Kaiser described how he wants to engage with the local Muslim community, perhaps giving a heightened sense of cultural acclimatisation, relative to his engagement with non-Muslim Brits; where his engagement appeared to be more driven by unwritten rules, passed down from social workers and neighbours. On line thirty-four, he shared with me that he thinks it is easier to come to a school with a similar cultural and religious demographic to you.

Kaiser was asked about how he felt refugees were perceived by those around him. He described how refugees are seen as being poor and positioned as vulnerable. He felt that there was recognition that refugees were fleeing their home countries due to issues around safety but explained how perceptions varied greatly from person to person.

Story six: My aspirations

K: I want to be a businessman.

K: Like, erm (4)... work... and make money.

K: I can see living in London.

K: My mum (1) she want to go back to Somalia and come back to here. She want to see like her sisters and her brothers.



K: I want my family to feel happy... always happy, have a nice life, happy life, all that.

Story six provided a brief insight into Kaiser's aspirations for the future. It was clear throughout his narrative that he valued education and wanted to use it as a stepping-stone into a career. He described how he wants to be a businessman, with money being an important factor to him. Early on in his narrative, Kaiser described the difficult life he had in Somalia. His focus on a career that offers significant financial reward was perhaps a response to some of the difficulties he faced in his life in Somalia. Kaiser described how he would like to continue to live in the UK, but described no sense of affiliation to the town he was living in. Another one of Kaiser's aspirations was for his family to be happy and have what he described as 'a nice life'. Whilst he could foresee visiting Somalia, Kaiser is planning a long-term future elsewhere in the UK.

### Reema Al-Talib's (Remy) Stories

When I met Remy, she was fifteen-years-old, and a pupil at a large comprehensive secondary school. She was born in Syria but had been living in the UK for around two years, following a bomb blast at her school. Her journey from Syria to the UK was not a simple one, leading her through Lebanon, Romania and Germany. Remy presented as a very confident girl, whose determination and maturity were admirable. She spoke passionately about her love for Syria, her difficulties in adjusting to life in the UK, and how her experiences have shaped her as a person. Remy's narrative included a difficult, somewhat guarded disclosure about self-harm as well a perceived need for cultural assimilation; both of which form the bases of two of the stories that emerged from her narrative. Through a process of co-constructing Remy's narrative, eleven stories emerged.

#### Story one: My life in Syria

- 1) My parents are from Iraq, but I born and lived in Syria. Aleppo\* was quite a nice place... they are friendly, they are nice... they always help each other.
- 2) I wake up in the morning... always sun... always. I always have my friends with me. I study and go down in the street, play with my friends...
- 3) In my area, there wasn't lots of problems because of the war but when there was a bomb blast in my school... after two weeks, my mum decided to come to England.
- 4) I heard a voice and then looked, and I saw blood. And then... army... one army... he picked me up and he covered my eyes and he asked me where is my home.

In her first story, Remy spoke very positively about her life in Syria prior to coming to the UK. The weather in Syria, and her friends there, were a recurring theme throughout her narrative. She described a collectivist society, with friends and neighbours who were

supportive of each other. Remy was reminiscent of her childhood, through which she described plentiful opportunities for outdoor play and developing friendships.

A stark contrast to this was in line three, where Remy shared her experience of a bomb blast at her school. Although she described her area as problem-free, the presence of the army around her school, indicated that such events were not entirely unexpected. She described a feeling of shock, before piecing together her memories of the event. Despite being exposed to bloodshed and a potential threat to her life, Remy went on to speak fondly of her school experiences in Syria. The decision for Remy to come to the UK, appeared to lie with Remy's mother, with Remy having little or no influence on that decision.

Story two: My perceptions of the UK

- 5) I always heard about England that it is a good country and is different to Syria.
- 6) I thought it was different in a positive way. But... yeah, I thought I would be happy.
- 7) I saw it from the aeroplane... I felt that it's not a good place and I don't wanna stay here.
- 8) I holded myself because I didn't want my mum to be sad because she's doing that for me.
- 9) But then I start crying. I was shouting "I don't want to stay here... No, I want my old house."

Remy described having positive perceptions of the UK before coming to live here. She explained that she had heard favourable things about England, describing it as 'different in a positive way', and had an expectation of happiness for when she arrived. However, she described how this suddenly changed as her aeroplane flew

over England. Remy painted a picture of a heart-wrenching feeling that made her not want to stay in the UK. However, she masked these feelings by way of protecting her mother, a theme that re-emerges later in her narrative. Remy's gut feeling of England not being where she wanted to live was exacerbated where, on line nine, she describes seeing her new home for the first time.

Story three: My journey to the UK

10) First my mum get the visa for England but we had to go Lebanon then Romania.

We stayed for one month in Romania.

11) From Lebanon to Romania... then from Romania to Germany and from Germany to here.

12) We all stayed there for one month until we get our next aeroplane. It was all Arabic people.

13) I don't know like how Iraqi people think. They were so different.

Remy described her physical journey to the UK, that involved several steps in various countries. The journey was filled with uncertainty and instability, with Remy not knowing what the next steps would be or how long she would need to wait in each location. She explained that she lived in Romania for around a month, in what she described as a refugee centre, with many other Arabs. Remy was asked about her experiences there and whether she sought some comfort in the fact that others there were having similar experiences. On line twelve, she described how she felt different to them as many of them were Iraqi. It was apparent through her narrative that despite Remy having Iraqi parents, she very much identified with being Syrian. Remy described a difference in mentality, as well as some language differences. It was interesting to hear how from Remy's perspective, she had little in common with others who were sharing a large part of her

journey to the UK, challenging the notion of refugees being treated as a homogenous group.

Story four: The help and support we received

- 14) There was people with us to tell us how to do the TV and everything. Telling us how we can use the buses and everything.
- 15) They helped me to find school. If we wanna find work, where do we go? So, my sister went to the job centre, she found a job and now she's working.
- 16) Teachers were very helpful. They did try to understand how I was feeling, especially Miss Hussain\*. She was trying to help me like... if I didn't come to school, she would come to my house and she will take me to school.
- 17) She told me that this is the only way I can make up my future again.

In story four, Remy briefly described some of the help and support she received in the UK. Much of the support she described involved practical guidance around the house when she first arrived, as well as details of how to access public transport, and assistance in finding a school place. She shared with me how her sister was keen to secure employment and how the staff from the local refugee resettlement programme assisted in signposting them to the Job Centre.

On line sixteen, Remy described the support she received in school, regarding her social and emotional wellbeing and mental health. Story eight provides further details of Remy's difficulties and needs in this area. She identified one particular teacher who she felt understood her well and would make a concerted effort to encourage her to come to school, including making visits to her home. Mrs Hussain recognised Remy's

determination to build a future, using this as a tool to encourage her to engage in her education, as described on line seventeen.

#### Story five: Language difficulties

18) My mum... When people come to her, she doesn't feel comfortable to talk English

19) I thought that I'm not going to have friends because I didn't understand much English, so they don't have to keep explaining to me what they're saying.

Story five provided a brief description of the language barrier that Remy and her family faced. Although there were not many explicit statements about language difficulties in Remy's narrative, I felt that she alluded to them several times, in reference to making friends and settling in. Remy described feeling somewhat burdensome to her new friends as she struggled with grasping the English language, meaning her friends would repeat and reword what they were saying to her. Remy also spoke about how her mother lacks confidence in communicating in English, acting as an additional barrier to her family's wider social integration in their new community.

#### Story six: Comparing my school experiences

20) Here everyone speaks about each other, they're always mean to each other. If you cry... they laugh at you.

21) They put me with all English people in class, so I didn't know anybody from my country at the beginning but then I met someone Syrian in here.

22) My friends in Syria were like "Remy\*, you can do it, come on". I think I tried hard for them, but here, people don't care.

23) If like you're from another country, doesn't mean we don't know how to eat, how to wear clothes. We have style, we have everything.

24) The form that I'm in is all EAL students. So, they all say that's the smelly form.

As mentioned in story one, Remy described having very deep meaningful friendships in Syria as well as generally positive experiences of schooling. In story six, she compared some of those experiences to her experiences of schooling in the UK. In story eight, Remy speaks about difficulties managing and expressing her emotions. On line twenty, she provides an insight into why she may have become more private about her emotions. She explains how her peers at school would laugh at her if she cried. Remy described how being placed in a class with only English students made it difficult for her to feel settled, as she was unable to relate to them, as well as struggling with the language. She went on to explain how she later met a Syrian sibling group at her school, vastly improving her experience of school, as she was able to express herself more freely.

Remy described her friends in Syria as a significant protective factor against some of her life challenges. She explained on line twenty-two how they would encourage her to study and build her self-confidence; something that she described as reciprocal.

When comparing this to her experiences of school in the UK, she felt that her peers here did not invest as much in each other, with little encouragement for their peers to excel. On line twenty-three, Remy explained how her difficulties with developing meaningful friendships could be partly attributed to the stereotypes others hold about refugees and other new arrivals to the UK. Remy wanted to make a statement to disprove the stereotypes held about refugees in the UK. On line twenty-four, she describes the pastoral form group she is now in is where the majority of the pupils who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL) are placed. She explained how it is known amongst other pupils in school as 'the smelly form', leading her to describe a further sense of othering and isolation.

Story seven: My sense of identity

- 25) I'm a Syrian girl who lives in England... because her country is not very good now, but she loves her country and she doesn't feel that she's from the place that she's in now.
- 26) I changed myself in here because I thought I had to change myself. I don't wanna stay the same girl who was in Syria because I'll keep remembering who I was then... I can't have that same girl here.
- 27) She's different. I'm just different. I'm not the same as them... the way they think.
- 28) I always say girls are stronger than boys because they can deal with things.
- 29) We didn't ask 'what is your religion?' This question was like bad in our country because it didn't matter what his religion is.

Remy described herself as a Syrian girl, who although lives in England, does not feel a sense of belonging to it. Her love for Syria was apparent in how she spoke about her experiences there throughout her narrative. Her sense of identity appeared to have two strands: one was the Remy who lived in Syria; and the other was the Remy who lives in the UK. In story ten, Remy talked in more detail about how she felt the need to assimilate upon settling in the UK. On line twenty-five, she talked about how she felt she had to change herself, and how this served the purpose of allowing her to move on from the feeling of loss and bereavement of the life she left behind in Syria.

Intertwined with her response to a question about her identity, was Remy's sense of feeling different. Remy described herself as a Syrian girl who is different, both in how she presents herself and how she thinks. She identified strongly with being female, explaining how she felt that girls are emotionally stronger and therefore better at dealing with challenges. She gave an example of a male friend of hers from Syria who



started studying at a UK school, but after facing some racism and bullying, he refused to go to school and has been withdrawn from education since.

An interesting point that Remy made about identity was that asking somebody about their religion was considered inappropriate in Syria. Despite there being religious diversity, it was not deemed to be something that should be asked. The whole idea of identity as a question seemed to confuse Remy somewhat with her appearing confused about the purpose of the question.

#### Story eight: Managing my emotions

30) A few months ago, I was cutting my hands because I really didn't wanna stay here.

31) Here, I feel really down, down. No matter how much I study, nothing can go inside my brain. I just forget everything.

32) I don't tell my family that I'm not happy. I was like, it's myself... I'm the one who can help myself at the end of the day. I'm the one who is feeling whatever I'm feeling. Nobody else can feel it.

33) Nobody can help me. I know it will make my parents feel more sad because I'm sad, so I'm always pretend that I'm happy and having a happy life.

34) Not because I wanted to kill myself, just because I wanted to kill some of the feelings inside of me. I'd always say, I'm a teenager... stop it now.

35) I feel my old self has just died... I left her in Syria.

In story eight, Remy opened up about some of her difficulties with managing her emotions and opening up to others about them. By way of dealing with her sense of bereavement of her life in Syria, the bullying she faced in UK schools, Remy started to self-harm. She explained how she felt down and how this was a significant barrier to her

ability to retain information and wider learning. When asked if she had spoken to anybody about this, Remy was adamant that only she had the power to help herself through it, as she felt that nobody could truly empathise with what she was feeling. When asked about whether she could speak to family members, Remy felt that she would be burdening her parents by sharing her feelings with them, instead pretending she was content with her life, by way of protecting her mother's feelings.

On line thirty-four, Remy described using self-talk to help her make sense of her emotions. However, she saw self-harm as a way of leaving behind a part of herself that she felt did not belong in the UK. She described how she felt that her old self had died and been left behind in Syria out of necessity rather than choice. It was evident from her narration of this part of her narrative that Remy continued to have difficulties understanding and accepting herself and managing her emotions in a positive way.

#### Story nine: Resilience and determination

36) I took my prefect tie and I did all this because I know I have to for my future. It's not because I'm happy at school or I have friends at school. I can't go back so I have to look at my future.

37) I think I was a stronger person, I didn't like to cry in front of people.

38) No, because I know how to stop people from doing that to me.

39) Myself. I kept telling myself that maybe... because I'm a teenager.

40) Like, me as a person, I don't need people to feel sorry for me.

Something that was evident throughout Remy's narrative was her sense of resilience and determination. She recognised many of the barriers she was facing and demonstrated a sense of determination to overcome them. In story nine, she outlined seemingly small, but significant practical steps to work towards a positive future. When asked to elaborate on

her experiences of racism as well as those of her friend, on line thirty-eight, she stated that she had found ways of managing racism and bullying and preventing others from feeling they are able to bully her. Remy attributed her determination to both her character and gender, stating that as a girl, she had the ability to recognise the importance of short-term sacrifice for long-term opportunities and prosperity. Alluding to some people's view that refugees are in need of support and potentially vulnerable, Remy rejected this label on line forty, stating that she did not need anybody to feel sorry for her.

Story ten: Fitting in

- 41) I changed myself in here because I thought I had to change myself. I don't wanna stay the same girl who was in Syria because I'll keep remembering who I was then.
- 42) I used to have long curly hair until there and dark... black, but then I cut it, I changed my style... I changed everything.
- 43) I felt so different. Here, they are so different. Girls who are twelve years old have too much make-up, you think they are bigger, they have boyfriends...
- 44) We don't put on that much make-up because you're still young. Here, if I do something childish, they look at me like 'aaah... what is she doing?' It's just me... I am doing this because I'm still a child.
- 45) I was always playing, I didn't put on make-up... but now I am, because I've seen people putting on make-up.
- 46) To be at least a bit the same. They always straight their hair so I straight mine.
- 47) Don't change yourself because you are here... like I did... because you'll feel worse. You won't have anything left from your country. Maybe if I stayed the same, they would have liked me more.

Remy spoke about cultural assimilation in story ten, describing how she felt the need to change herself as a person to fit in with how she felt she needed to be. On line forty-two, she described how she made physical changes to her appearance by cutting her hair short, dyeing and straightening it, in an attempt to be more like the girls in her current school. She went on to describe how she started to wear make-up to fit in with others at her school. Remy explained how there was a more prolonged sense of childhood in Syria, where playing and activities associated with childhood were encouraged for older children, whereas she described that in the UK, there was a sense of coerced adolescence/early adulthood through expected physical appearance and maturity in behaviour.

When asked how comfortable she felt doing this, Remy described how she had accepted the need to make these changes but did not feel entirely comfortable with the person she can become. She was then asked what advice she would give to others in her situation, which she described on line forty-seven. She advised others not to change themselves for social acceptance, as it made her feel worse. She also described losing her sense of identity to a degree, stating that you won't have anything left from your own country. On reflection, Remy questioned whether she would have been liked more as a person in school if she had not attempted to assimilate, and instead stayed true to herself.

#### Story 11: Perceptions of Syria and treatment of refugees

48) Nobody can understand what it's like. All they see is what it's like now and on TV they only show the bad people. They don't show all the good people in Syria.

49) ... he said Syrian people are disgusting, that always kill each other.

50) They make people feel sorry for them.

51) Some of them are nice. When they see that you don't speak English, they try to help you

52) I was speaking Arabic and he asked me what language I was speaking, and I said 'Syrian'. He then shouted, 'Why are you here?'

53) I felt... it's none of your business why I'm here.

54) The form that I'm in is all EAL students. So, they all say that's the smelly form.

In her final story, Remy explored what she felt were perceptions of refugees in the UK, as well as more specifically how Syrian refugees were viewed. She felt that nobody could truly understand the beauty of Syria as the media portrays it from a skewed lens. She described a situation where somebody at her school described Syrian people as 'disgusting', relating this to his perception of the prevalence of murder in Syria.

On line fifty, Remy shared an alternative picture of the perception of refugees, stating that sometimes the media encourages people to sympathise with them. She described some positive experiences of people trying to help, particularly with scaffolding and supporting language. However, Remy went on to describe a more negative experience she had whilst speaking Arabic to a friend on public transport. Her choice of language was questioned, before she was asked why she was in this country, in an abrupt, provocative manner. On the final line of the story, Remy shared her experience of feeling othered at school. Her pastoral form group, which is where all the EAL pupils who were new to the country were placed, was labelled the 'smelly form' by English-speaking pupils. She also described how the group received jibes about whether they knew how to eat, how to shower and how to dress.

## **Discussion**

In this research, I aimed to explore the journeys of young refugees to the UK, with a focus on post-migration factors. The narratives shared in this research were both insightful and emotive. As I reflected on my experiences as a researcher, I recognised the impact of the narratives shared on me as well as on the narrators. I considered that listening to and inevitably co-constructing the narratives was in itself an immersive experience that evoked a range of emotions. As a researcher, I was conscious of 'bracketing off' my emotions to prevent my personal feelings around the subject area influencing the research. Similarly, despite my interest in particular points raised in the narratives, I was mindful of not probing too deeply, to avoid potential re-traumatisation for narrators.

Narrators provided varied insights into the experiences of young refugees who had relatively recently moved to the UK. Through the process of analysing the narratives, I developed an enhanced understanding of the barriers faced by young refugees, the complexity of their journeys and the support they received and desired to help them to resettle in the UK. Although underpinned by a set of experiences that were unique to each narrator, several common features were identified. In this section, I will reflect on the overlapping features of the narratives shared by Dahnish, Nadeem, Kaiser, Emile and Remy, before discussing their implications for Educational Psychology practice. I have structured the overlapping themes in response to my research questions.

### **Overlapping themes**

<b>Overlapping themes across narratives</b>
1. Overcoming war and threat to life with resilience.
2. Language as an integral part of resettlement

3. Family and other protective factors
4. Experience of racism
5. Cultural assimilation, trans-culturalism and the notion of whiteness
6. An evolving refugee identity

1) What were your experiences prior to you coming to the UK?

*Overcoming war and threat to life with resilience*

The threat to the lives of the narrators was an explicit theme in some of the narratives with it being more implicit in others. In Dahnish and Remy's narratives, a more graphic description of violence was offered, emphasising the very real threat to their lives as well as the violence and bloodshed they observed as children. As discussed in the literature review, research in the area has traditionally focused on these adverse experiences of refugees (e.g. Howard & Hodes, 2000; Savin et al., 1996). However, it has thus led to the pathologizing and medicalisation of refugees (Summerfield, 2000).

On the contrary, the narratives shared in this research told a story of resilience and determination. In his narrative, Dahnish used evaluative statements to make sense of his experiences of war and violence, drawing on his protective factors of faith and family. Remy's story of determination appeared to come from a personal desire to succeed and better her life, as well as to protect her family from her emotional distress. Both Dahnish's and Remy's narratives had elements of within-child and within-home protective factors as described by Fonaghy et al (1994). Within-child factors included social competence and a sense of humour, and within-home protective factors included high education levels and a sense of parental responsibility in the home. In their

narratives, Nadeem, Kaiser and Emile also demonstrated resilience to the challenges they faced in their home countries as well as those they have faced since arriving in the UK.

2) What were the post-migration factors that helped your resettlement in the UK?

### *Language as an integral part of resettlement*

The importance of being able to communicate in English was a theme that was present in all five of the narratives, with varying levels of emphasis put on it by each narrator. Their varied experiences of English language support meant it appeared both as a helping and a hindering factor across the narratives. Poor English language skills were described as having a significant subsequent impact upon various aspects of resettlement. This included: acting as a barrier to accessing education, as the narrators described how they did not understand what they were being taught; difficulties with developing friendships; problems accessing services; and reducing their confidence as learners.

The importance placed by research participants on language is in line with the suggestions of Asimwe, Fan and Fan (2015) and Nelson (2015) that language is an integral part of inclusion, calling for education systems to incorporate specific language policies and support for children arriving from non-English speaking countries; a sentiment I would echo, in relation to my research. Nadeem's description of accessing education with limited language skills, by nodding his head to demonstrate interest, echoes some of the descriptions from Sporton and Valentine's (2007) study, where they described how young refugees were expected to learn the English language 'through osmosis'.

### *Family and other protective factors*

All five of the narratives shared included a discussion about protective factors including the important role that family members played in helping them settle in the UK. Dahnish described how he felt lucky to be with his family, explaining how other people he had met



along his journey has lost their parents to war. In his narrative, Emile spoke of the integral role that his mother played in his resettlement, describing a sense of protection that he felt he needed to repay in the future, reversing the role to become ‘the protector’ of his family. Nadeem and Remy explained how wider networks including friends of the family and other refugee families helped them to resettle, offering them practical support as well as advice. The recurrent protective factors present in these narratives were in line with those suggested by Fonaghy et al (1994). They helped promote a more positive sense of purpose and resilience to the challenges of resettlement. Across the five narratives, there was an overarching theme about the importance of having access to other young people of a similar cultural and/or linguistic background. Nadeem explained how he felt that they could understand him better, describing how he felt he could be himself around them and “speak the truth” because their story was ‘like his’. Having access to other refugee children in school was identified as a helping factor that was also present in Remy and Dahnish’s narratives.

### 3) What were the post-migration factors that hindered your resettlement in the UK?

#### *Experiences of racism*

By focusing some of my questioning on the experiences of the narrators upon arrival on the UK, I aimed to explore the impact of post-migration factors. One of the recurring themes was their experience of racism, which formed an integral part of four of the five narratives. In some of the narratives, it was described as having a significant, negative effect on not only the narrators’ resettlement experiences but also how they felt that refugees and others from the Middle East were perceived. As highlighted by Rutter (2006), I felt that due regard should be given to post-migration factors such as experiences of racism and poverty. It was evident from their narratives that their

experiences of racism had left a lasting impression and, in all cases, appeared to be a factor in them not wanting to live in their current town in the future. Interestingly, despite the narrators being housed in socially deprived areas with high levels of poverty, none of them described issues around poverty, instead demonstrating gratitude for support they received.

The impact of language barriers exacerbated some of the experienced racism, leading to perceptions amongst others that refugees are unintelligent. Nadeem described how other children would make fun of him, saying that he is a refugee and therefore 'dumb'. Remy's narrative also alluded to how others perceived her as being incompetent and uncultured due to her cultural background and refugee status. The way schools addressed this was described in the narratives, with most schools putting international new arrivals in the same classes. However, this led to other complexities, such as the description by Remy about how her form group of EAL students were referred to as 'the smelly form'.

The racism and prejudice faced by narrators led in some situations to dehumanising experiences that exacerbated a sense of powerlessness. In Nadeem's description of being targeted in his local town centre, he spoke about how he was told he could not do anything in response to provocation due to his refugee status. A powerful line from his narrative was 'Refugees or not, we're still people'; highlighting the sense of dehumanisation he felt through the prejudice he faced. Some of the narrators, particularly Remy, appeared to distance themselves from the refugee status due to the powerlessness it appeared to portray, in line with findings from Kebede (2010). However, Nadeem continued to see being a refugee as an integral part of his identity, telling me he was not scared of maintaining the label.

#### 4) Do you feel a sense of belonging to a particular place?

### *Cultural assimilation, trans-culturalism and the notion of whiteness*

This theme manifested itself in various different ways across the narratives. For example, in Remy's narrative, she spoke explicitly about her perceived need to change who she was as a person in an attempt to assimilate as much as possible with the new culture in which she lives. She described both physical changes such as how she wore her hair, as well as behavioural changes to match expected behaviours of adolescents. Remy described it as a need to "kill" a part of her and leave behind her old self, because she would not be accepted here.

Several of the other narrators alluded to the theme by sharing that they were advised on British etiquette, socially appropriate ways of behaving, speaking to others and the subtleties of the English language. Emile described this as being advised on "how to deal with people", with Kaiser sharing examples such as not shouting or making any noise at home as this may upset neighbours and result in them calling the police. In addition, Kaiser was advised by school staff not to speak his first language whilst at home, despite their family members often speaking little or no English. The importance of trans-culturalism is described by Burnett (2013), whereby refugees would be expected to assimilate and adopt aspects of their new culture. However, it was evident from some of the narratives that this is a complex process. There was both a desire and expectation to maintain a cultural identity from their home country whilst adopting notions of whiteness, as described by (Rivière, 2008).

I consider that some of the notions of whiteness are perpetuated through the government led cascading of 'British values' include tolerance, acceptance and combatting discrimination in schools. These appeared to be in stark contrast to the sense of British culture many of the narrators were exposed to in their neighbourhoods as well as in

school. Whilst British values such as tolerance and respect are promoted in schools, many of the narrators described experiencing verbal and physical abuse, racial discrimination and Islamophobia. This led some of the narrators to describe a sense of hypocrisy, e.g. Dahnish describing a desire to move to a more affluent town in the UK with whom he described as ‘original British people’ who were ‘not racist’, and who he felt would perhaps ascribe to the British values discussed in schools.

### *An evolving refugee identity*

One of the areas I was particularly interested in exploring was the narrators’ sense of identity and belonging. I was conscious that the word identity may be unfamiliar to some, given that English was an additional language for them. Interestingly, it transpired that the idea of exploring one’s sense of identity was culturally an alien one for Kaiser and Emile. I offered some of the narrators an example of how I perceived my identity to be. Dahnish and Remy described how in their home countries, it was considered discourteous to ask others about their identity, particularly in terms of a religious identity. Erikson’s description of identity versus confusion, and Marcia’s moratorium phase were apparent in Remy’s narrative. She described a strong sense of knowing who she was in Syria, but feelings of confusion that led to exploration when she arrived in the UK. Towards the end of her narrative, there was a sense of discontent with the identity she had adopted, with her questioning whether she would have been better liked had she maintained her previous identity. However, on reflection, identity as a concept described by Erikson was not apparent across the narratives shared by the four male participants. I recognised that the experiences described by narrators, in which they had little agency or influence over what happened in their life, may be a contributing factor to this. Additionally, I considered that the concept of ‘adolescence’ and ‘identity’ might not be universal. As such, the need or desire to explore and form an individual identity might not be considered as

important in their cultures. Rather, there was a greater sense of a group identity prevalent amongst the narratives. There is perhaps scope beyond this research to explore whether gender differences in terms of how narrators viewed their role in their families influenced their ability and desire to explore their identities.

None of the five narrators felt that they had adopted or foresaw adopting a British identity. Remy described how despite changing her physical appearance and dress to fit in, she felt different to other British girls. In line with conclusions drawn by Sporton and Valentine (2007) and Nelson (2015), I felt that this may be due to them associating a British identity with a White identity. Interestingly, when speaking about British or English people, the narrators appeared to reserve this term for White British people. Dahnish spoke about Muslims in Britain as distinctly different from other British people, particularly when discussing his thoughts and experiences immediately following the terrorist attack in Manchester in 2017. Whilst Sporton and Valentine (2007) describe a cultural capital and social privilege associated with Whiteness, all five of the narrators appeared to reject this, instead demonstrating pride in their home countries and describing a preference for living there in the future.

In line with Maslow's adaptations to his original writings on the hierarchy of needs, it appeared that the need to belong to their home country was on a par with safety needs, rather than following on from it. Whilst there has not been specific research exploring the experiences of young refugees in relation to Maslow's work, very recent research by Yotebieng, Syvertsen and Awah (2018) questioned whether psychological wellbeing is possible when you are 'out of place'. They subsequently called for the development of a resilience and wellbeing framework, a suggestion I would support.

Some of the barriers to psychological wellbeing were present in Remy's narrative, where she described a sense of rootlessness, mirroring one of the key findings of Sporton and Valentine's (2007) study. The idea of rootlessness also appeared in Nadeem's narrative where he described not being able to have 'real friends', explaining that there was 'no point' as he knew he would be moving in the future. Further evidence of rootlessness and its challenges to identity formation was also present in Emile's narrative, where he shared that he has lived his whole life as a refugee. Interestingly, it appeared that there was no recognition of the need to support identity formation in schools or for school staff to get to know refugee children in their schools. Both Kaiser and Dahnish shared with me that they would have appreciated the opportunity to share their experiences with school staff to enable school staff to better understand their background and who they were.

To complement my interest in exploring identity and belonging, I sought to give due regard to the influence of media portrayals of refugees on their identity formation, as suggested by Greenslade (2005) and Triandafyllidou (2018). However, in the narratives shared, the narrators unanimously rejected media portrayals of refugees, seemingly unperturbed by how the media and wider society viewed them. Despite several descriptions of racial prejudice and negative stereotyping, most of the narrators embraced the identity of being a refugee and drew personal interpretations of what it meant for them.

### **Critical evaluation of approach and methods adopted**

The methods adopted in this research were perceived to be the most appropriate, in line with my epistemological and ontological views, as well as to best respond to my research questions. I maintain that the narratives shared offer the perspectives of the narrator, guided by me, the researcher, rather than a factual account of events. Additionally, the

way in which narratives were shared and the emerging themes focused upon, may have varied depending on how and when they were shared. Furthermore, Gubrium and Holstein (2008) highlighted how storytelling can be consciously or subconsciously conditioned by the audience, as well as the environment.

As discussed in the methodology chapter, I recognise that the narratives have been co-constructed by myself as the researcher and the narrators. My areas of personal and professional interest may have influenced the decisions I took through the research process. Despite this, I aimed to maintain a generally unstructured approach to our conversations, to allow the narrative to be guided as much by the narrator as possible. However, this was challenging as all the narrators spoke English as an additional language. This was particularly problematic in my conversations with Emile and Kaiser as both of them required significant prompting, repeating of questions and reframing.

Owing partly to the method employed, as well as time constraints and issues with recruiting participants, the number of participants in this research was limited.

Recruitment issues were partly due to my somewhat restrictive criteria. I was keen not to use interpreters in my research as I felt that this would detract from the personal relationship that can be formed through the process of co-constructing a narrative.

Additionally, I hoped for the narrators to be relatively new to the UK, to capture what I feel are changing attitudes towards refugees in the UK. Despite the relatively small sample size, I aimed to draw ‘tentative conclusions’ from my research that hold practical utility for educational and psychological practitioners alike, rather than drawing generalisable conclusions.

Some of the critique of narrative approaches in academic literature lies in its view of objectivity (Patterson, 2008). However, I maintain in my adapted use of the Labovian

approach, in line with my epistemological view, that an objective reality should be assumed from the core narrative. In doing so, it positions us as researchers as genuine empathisers with their stories, allowing us to recognise their perspectives. Riessman (2008) described narratives as an opportunity for storytellers to reimagine their lives; simultaneously transporting listeners into a time and space that enables us to experience and appreciate their narratives.

I have aimed to maintain transparency in regard to my methodological choices and ethical considerations throughout my research. As well as providing a step-by-step description of my approach to analysis, I have included my colour-coded transcripts in the appendices by way of demonstrating rigour in my analysis. By including my transcripts, I hope for the reader to draw his/her own interpretations from the transcript, as well as being guided through my thinking that allowed me to draw my interpretations; further adding a sense of transparency in my research.

### **Distinctive contribution**

As discussed in the literature review, much of the historic academic literature around refugees has focused on pre-migration factors, leading to positioning refugees as ‘traumatised’, leading to pathologizing and medicalising of them (Summerfield, 2000). My aim was to shift the focus from a trauma-focused narrative to one that looked at post-migration factors, a shift welcomed by Kohli and Mather (2003). Whilst there has been a steady shift towards this in the past decade, academic literature continues to be dominated by practitioner discourses. Through my research, I aimed to create a platform for young refugees to have their voices heard and listened to, in an academic sphere, which they usually are not. Additionally, as well as looking at post-migration factors, I sought to



explore the concepts of identity and how these were shaped by social experiences in the UK as well as media discourses.

One of the distinctive strengths in this research lies in its methodological approach. Within the narrative approach lies the power to examine both ‘private troubles’ and ‘public issues’ (Goodley & Smailes, 2011). The unstructured nature of the narrative approach allowed for the emergence of themes that are not prevalent in current literature in the area. Examples include the importance of proficiency in the English language and the rejection of a British identity, owing perhaps in part to some of their negative experiences of living in the UK. Additionally, whilst narrative research is not aimed to be used as a therapeutic tool, it was possible that it had therapeutic outcomes for the narrators.

Hek (2005) describes how the voices of refugees are often oppressed in their country of origin subsequently further oppressed on arrival. Furthermore, one of the themes that emerged across several narratives was the idea of being a child and therefore not having a say in their decision to move to the UK. Many of the narrators described not questioning their parents’ decision or asking any questions in hindsight, leaving them with significant gaps in their understanding of their stories and journeys. This highlighted to me a sense of multiple oppression of their voice, owing to their refugee status and age. This research aimed to counteract that by providing a safe, semi-structured platform for their voices to be heard, and calls for opportunities and platforms for young refugees to share their narratives.

My research also suggests that schools require significant support in developing policies and processes around welcoming and resettling refugee children and young people into school as well as into the wider community. I call for opportunities for young refugees to

develop trusting and meaningful relationships with key adults in school, as well as safe spaces being developed for social interactions and friendship building with other refugees as well as the wider school population. I foresee a role for schools to work more widely with refugee families to address barriers faced by parents in understanding and supporting their children's education. Additionally, this research calls for a specific focus on language development, with targeted work to assess, monitor and support English language skills. As suggested by Nadeem, assistive technology such as a tablet with translation software may encourage independence and confidence in young refugees as learners.

### **Implications for practice and dissemination of research**

One of my guiding principles when choosing a research area was the need for my work to make a distinctive contribution to the profession of Educational Psychology. I consider this research to hold practical utility on both an individual and systemic level. The change in the demographics of UK schools, particularly in areas that have welcomed significant numbers of refugees, suggests that educational psychologists are increasingly likely to work with young refugees in their practice. With psychological theory such as Erikson's theories of psycho-social development, as well as systems theories underpinning the practice of most educational psychologists, I consider this research to add value in exploring the added psychological complexity of being a refugee and the impact of this on their education. I consider that the overlapping themes emerging from the narratives will highlight the need for working sensitively with young refugees on an individual level to develop resilience and promote an exploration of their identities using safe, supportive and non-judgemental approaches.

I recognise that there are potential systemic implications of this research for the Educational Psychology profession. The most commonly recurring theme from this research suggests that language is an integral part of resettlement and thus schools and other services supporting refugees should consider how this can be prioritised. Interestingly, the experiences of racism and/ or Islamophobia described in many of the narratives, gave an indication of the social discourses the young refugees were exposed to. However, there was no description of buffering of these viewpoints, either in or outside of school. I consider there is a role for educational psychologists to support schools in developing opportunities, processes and strategies to help young refugees who are faced with racist or Islamophobic discourses.

As well as my personal and professional interests in the experiences of young refugees, I sought a research area that is current and will hold practical utility not only for educational psychologists, but also for other educational and psychological practitioners. The three local authorities for which I have worked over the past three years all have an interest in the research area, owing to the large number of refugees they are expecting to welcome over the next five years. The first two authorities have a significant history of welcoming refugees, but the demographics of those refugees has changed significantly over the past decade.

The local authority I currently work for has little experience of welcoming and resettling refugees, with many of the schools now welcoming refugees into their school community for the first time. My research proposals were well received both within the local authorities and in schools across the authorities, with the research being described as very useful. A copy of my research has been requested by a strategic lead in my current local authority, who is currently in the process of developing the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme. I have recently presented my research at an Educational Psychology service

day, receiving positive feedback on the research topic, methodology and practical utility for practitioners. It is hoped that the research will inform decision making at a strategic level as well as providing ‘food for thought’ for school staff who will be welcoming refugees into their schools. Additionally, when recognising the value that the participants of this research placed on having their family and other refugees as protective factors, support for unaccompanied refugee children should be given additional consideration.

As well as being disseminated to local authority officers who work specifically with refugees and asylum seekers, my research will be available for schools to request.

Additionally, I have been asked to present this research at a North West Educational Psychology Conference.

### **Limitations and implications for future research**

Despite calls from Hek (2005) as well as Kohli and Mather (2003), research in the area continues to be dominated by practitioner discourses around refugees, as well as a recent emergence of media discourses. The voice of young refugees continues to be absent from much of the leading literature in the area. Whilst the narratives shared were both personal and powerful, the element of co-constructing them allowed for the potential for narratives to be skewed to reflect the ideas of the researcher. I felt that avoiding this was particularly challenging with Kaiser and Emile’s narrative as they struggled to articulate themselves with confidence in English.

All of the narrators alluded to a sense of belonging and attachment to other refugees with a similar story to them. Many of them described being able to be themselves around other refugees without fear of judgement. As well as allowing space for individual narratives to be shared, it may be useful to also create space for small focus groups, where the

participants had the opportunities to reflect on their experiences and validate some of their thoughts and experiences.

Guilfoyle and Hancock (2009) argue that there should be a focus less on the personal narratives of refugees but rather on those of the host society for a more positive change to be facilitated. From an ethical and methodological perspective, it could be argued that this could be downplaying the richness and value in exploring personal narratives of refugees. However, I feel it may be useful to undertake a comparison of the narratives of the host society with those of refugees, to look for commonalities as well as potential gaps in understanding.

Following on from some of our narrative discussions, the narrators explained to me how they found it very useful to speak to me about their experiences, as I was the first person they had spoken to about them in such depth. Narratives are described by Riessman (2008) as enablers for order to be brought about in individuals' lives. I would therefore consider an exploration of the therapeutic possibilities of narrative practice and the potential impact of it on facilitating positive changes in the lives of young refugees.

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## Participant Information Sheet

### **A narrative approach to exploring the journey of young refugees through their resettlement in the UK. What were the post-migration helping and hindering factors?**

You are being invited to take part in a project into the journey of young refugees in the UK. Before you decide, it is important for you to know why the research is being done and what that means for you. Please take time to read this carefully and ask others if you wish. Feel free to ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

#### **What is the project's purpose?**

The project is to help researchers and teachers to know more about the journey of young refugees coming to the UK. It hopes to give you a chance for your stories to be heard. We hope that you will help us to get a better understanding of things that were helpful or unhelpful when you moved to the UK. This information will be used to help teachers and other people who work with children to better understand and support young refugees. There will be relaxed one to one conversation with me that should take around 45-60 minutes. You will also be able to use photographs, pictures or other ways to help you tell your story.

#### **Why have I been chosen?**

You have been chosen as one of six young people to take part in the project. Adults who have known you through school, college or the ACIS centre felt that you would have some important and valuable things to share to make this project better.

#### **Do I have to take part?**

Getting involved in the research would be greatly appreciated but it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form to say you are happy to do it. You can still change your mind and withdraw at any time and do not have to give a reason.

#### **What will happen to me if I take part?**

You will be invited to share your narrative, or story, either in your school setting or somewhere else you can easily get to. It is expected that this will take 45-60 minutes but there is no need for you to stay for the whole time if you feel that you have shared as much information as you feel comfortable doing. Also, there is no time limit by which the session should end; you are welcome to continue over this 60-minute period or ask for another session to continue sharing your story.

#### **Why should I take part?**

The research wants to give a chance for young refugees to have their stories shared and voices heard. It will give me a chance to help teachers and people who work with children to better understand and support young refugees both in and out of school.

#### **What happens if the research study stops earlier than expected?**

If the research needs to be stopped earlier than expected, you will be told about this, the reasons for this and offered another option for your narrative to be shared if you wish.

#### **What if something goes wrong?**

If you are unsure or unhappy with any part of the research project, you should contact me to see if there is anything I can help or support with. If you would like to speak to somebody else about your concerns with the research you can ask for the contact details of my supervisor.

**Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?**

Your personal details will be kept strictly confidential and will only be seen by me, the researcher, and my supervisor. If anything you share means that you or somebody else is at risk of significant harm then that information may have to be shared with school or college staff.

**Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?**

The voice recordings of our conversations made during this research will be used only by me, the researcher. No other use will be made of them without you agreeing to this, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

**What will happen to the results of the research project?**

The research may be published in 2018 or 2019 after it has been checked by the University of Sheffield. You will be asked if you want to receive a copy of the research if/when it is published. The research findings will be used to help teachers and other people who work with children to know more about the stories of young refugees and how best to support them. The information you share may be used for future research that may include a follow-up study of this project.

**Who has ethically reviewed the project?**

This project has been checked by the University of Sheffield Ethics committee.

**Contact for further information**

Please contact Jawad Shah (lead researcher) by e-mail on [jshah5@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:jshah5@sheffield.ac.uk) for further information. Alternatively, you may contact the research supervisor, Anthony Williams, on [Anthony.williams@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:Anthony.williams@sheffield.ac.uk)

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for taking part in the project. Your contributions will be strongly appreciated in helping us get a better understanding of the stories and narratives of young refugees in the UK.

Kind regards,

**Jawad Shah**

**Trainee Educational and Child Psychologist**

**University of Sheffield**

**[Jshah5@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:Jshah5@sheffield.ac.uk)**

## Participant Consent Form

**Title of Research Project:** A narrative approach to exploring the journey of young refugees through their resettlement in the UK. What were the post-migration helping and hindering factors?

**Name of Researcher:** Jawad Shah

**Participant Identification Number for this project:**

**Please initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project. ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. ☐
3. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified in the report or reports that result from the research. ☐
4. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research ☐
5. I agree to take part in the above research project. ☐

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

*(or legal representative)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person taking consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

*(if different from lead researcher)*

*To be signed and dated in presence of the participant*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lead Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

*To be signed and dated in presence of the participant*

**Copies:**

*Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project's main record (e.g. a site file), which must be kept in a secure location.*

## Parental Consent Form

**Title of Research Project:** A narrative approach to exploring the journey of young refugees through their resettlement in the UK. What were the post-migration helping and hindering factors?

**Name of Researcher:** Jawad Shah

**Participant Identification Number for this project:**

**Please initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Parent Information Sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project. ☐
2. I understand that my child's participation is voluntary and that he/she is free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should he/she not wish to answer any particular question or questions, they are free to decline. ☐
3. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to his/ her anonymised responses. I understand that my child's name will not be linked with the research materials, and they will not be identified in the report or reports that result from the research. ☐
4. I agree for the data collected from him/ her to be used in future research. ☐
5. I agree to my child taking part in the above research project. ☐

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of parent giving consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lead Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Copies:

*Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project's main record (e.g. a site file), which must be kept in a secure location.*

## **Appendix D**

Potential interview questions to help support the co-construction of the narrative, if needed:

- a) Tell me about how you came to the UK from (home country)?
- b) What helped you to feel welcome and settle here?
- c) Is there anything that made you feel less welcome?
- d) What do you hope teachers would know about your experiences?

**Dahnish\* Rana\* Transcription**

**Date:** 19<sup>th</sup> July 2017

**Venue:** ACIS- Head of ACIS' office

--- Abstract

--- Orientation

--- Complicating action

--- Result/ resolution

--- Evaluation

--- Coda

J: Hi Dahnish\*. I want to say hello again properly. Thank you very much for coming today to talk to me about your experiences of being a young refugee coming to the UK.

D: You're welcome.

J: Please tell us first a little bit about yourself... your name and your background.

D: OK. My name is Dahnish\* Rana\*. I come to England... on... (2) can you start again, sorry?

J: It's fine, I can cut it out afterwards.

D: Oh OK. My Dahnish\*... sorry. My name is Dahnish\* Rana\*. I'm seventeen years old. My birthday is first of January 2000. I've got two brother and my mum and my dad... and we living in Smalltown\*. I come one year and ten month, like this... and I am studying in Smalltown\* College. I studying English, I.T, Maths... that's it.

J: OK. That's good. So you're studying English, I.T and Maths at Smalltown\* College?

D: They call it ESOL.

J: The ESOL course?

D: Yes.

J: And how are you finding the ESOL course? Are you enjoying it?

D: Yes. It's good.

J: Did you say you've been in England two years and ten months in total?

D: When?

J: How long have you been in England?

D: One year and ten months.

J: One year and ten months.... OK. Can you tell me then a little bit about your background and kind of your home country and what led you to coming to England?

D: I start in 2000... I born in 2000 and war happened in Iraq, I was like... three or four, five years. And then they killed my uncle and they come to take my uncle and we don't know about them 'til now. And in 2006 we moving to Syria because they say the message for my dad WE WILL KILL YOU, WE WILL KILL YOUR FAMILY... like this and we go to Kurdistan to stay in my aunty home and after one month we go to Syria. We stay in Syria ten year... After five year the war is happening in Syria as well. We moving back to Iraq but Iraq same. There is no good, no safet'. The same thing when we left it. We go back after like two months, we go back Syria and we find like a good place but is n good for like Iraqi people and for Sunni people. Because they say... some people, not all the people, they said that Sunni is races... not... sorry, the ISIS... the terrorist like this and we... we go out some time, the army ask me about my ID, my passport. Sometime I left it at home and they like... they take me. They take me to go back to Iraq but I call my brother because if my daddy come, they take him straight and send him to Iraq and put him in the prison they call the Abu Gharaib. There is no good there. Anyone go there, he can't go out. He want to go, by a lot of money or some money.

J: A prison in Syria?

D: In Iraq.

J: In Iraq, OK.

D: They send you there. And... I call my brother, he take his passport and my passport as well to show I am Iraqi and I'm not a terrorist like this and they leave me. This happen like three or four time but we didn't say this to anyone. This happen like three or four time but we didn't say this to anyone. My dad he know only about one time because he scared he say we will take you and we (...) again, my uncle what happens in Iraq. From 2006 to 2017 we don't know anything about him. Yeah and in 2015... we was in like the house, breakfast. Someone, he called my dad. He say are you son Ibrahim Mahan? He say I'm son Ibrahim Mahan. And they called him congratulation you can go now to the England. My dad he not believe that. He say "who are you?" He say "we are the UN". Like Refugee action yeah. He was happy... he was crying. He say "are you sure? You sure this is my name because I am waiting ten years like this. She say yes I'm sure. You can come tomorrow like... at eight o'clock or nine o'clock and my dad, he say I will come at si(h)x o'clock, seven o'clock, no worries. And they... when he closed the phone he was stand and he pray to the God. The sujud to the God to thank Him. And he was crying. And he say... (inaudible).. you sure? Two time they say you go to the America. If we go to the America, it was no good because only six month then they leave you like the homeless people. That's why we no go to America. After one year, this year... one day he call him, we go next day, they tell him you will go to England. You and your family, will see good life and safe in England. Good life.. there is no racist, no terrorist, no war. He say yeah.. yes, I want to go because I want to save my family and I want future for my kids and good future for my kids. They say yes. He sign it and when we go to the home, he say leave the school for everyone but no my little brother. He was like ten or eleven year. We say why? He say because there is.. some people in Syria, when someone he go out of the country like Araba, America, any country outside, they say he is rich and they take him and like they take his kids, they call his dad, we need money to leave your son or we will kill him.

J: Uh-huh.

D: We say yeah,, but we should go to the school if the UN they day you can go like this, when they do the check or the body like this and the DNA. He say OK but you should be careful. We say we will go two or three days a week.. it's good. He said yeah, is ok. But when you finish school, you should to back,.. quick to the home. And after one year, we finish everything, they say tomorrow..

next week Monday, Tuesday, they say we will go to Lebanon and we go to Romania, we go to England. We say yeah is ok. They say you have to bring a bag like twenty kilo. Only twenty kilo. Up to twenty kilo. We say is ok. We don't need up to twenty. We go and we waiting... they say, they say we waiting. They choose. We go the waiting for the bus travel like this. They call my dad and say not today... we got a problem from Lebanon they can't let you in to travel from there to take a plane.

J: Can I ask, At this point how old were you then?

D: When?

J: When this was happening.

D: When they call my dad?

J: Yeah.

D: My dad is scared, he say we no... we no letting go. Because they take the ID. Like in this country, we got ID, same in Syria we got ID. The ID she say, I will save form you and I can't stay like five year, one year in this country... after this they start again. We go back to the home. This time we give the key... the key for the home for the next door. Someone he hot the home. We go back and he say "what... what you no going?" we say they call back and they say you are late, one week. They do this for three time because Lebanon don't let me and my family and there is two family as well, go.

J: SO can I ask as this point when you've been three times, how are you feeling as a young person at the time?

D: We feeling like... like... if we go to England, we need magic. This was dream. This was dream. That's what my dad... he say. But we stopped the school. We will go like one day because my dad say you cant go now because we haven't got ID. If they catch you now, they tell you, you haven't got ID. I cant take the passport because if I lost it, that's other problem for me. and they ... they call after three time or four time.. I not remember. They say on Sunday you go but this time we sure because Lebanon they say yes they can travel and they can go. We go, we waiting for the bus. My family, my two brother, my dad and my mum and two brother and there is two family as well. One family mum and his son. And one family, man and his wife and his son. He is older, like five years. We wait for the bus. travel bus.. and we get in and they say you are now in safe. You are in.. UN they saved you. (Inaudible). Now anyone.. they can't do anything for you. Now you are like freedom. Because in Syria we didn't have freedom like we have in this country. Like we cant go like ten o clock. Eight o clock, we should be home. Because outside like some people, they is like mafia in Syria. They got the knife, anything, the gun. From army, they go... no army, like police officer like this. They can take the people then kill them.

J: How did it feel as a child growing up in that environment?

D: Where?

J: Growing up in Iraq and in Syria with all that danger around you, how did it feel?

D: It feel like scared. Like they say.... I know some people from Syria it was like... errr... sister and brother, their kids my friends. His mother and father they dead from bomb... bomb. When someone is dead we do lie... something old people, they go, and they say Allah will save him... they will go to Jannah, like this. I was with my friend and his two brother. Someone he call him and the kids... the boy and the girl... they say, why are we like... why we are like born in this world,



this time? Here I am... I stop... I can't say anything. This girl is only five years and he say that. How about... how about another people? Some people... all his family is dead, he don't know anything about them. (inaudible). I say... the God... he will give you test... have you got sabr? What they call in English.

D: Patient, yeah, sorry?

J: Patience.

D: Patience, yeah. And they say, the girl... she say, I need my mum. Where is my mum? I can't say anything because... is... like... hard for her and his brother. I said nowadays... you will see her someday. No worries. She will come back. She's gone... like to hospital, like this. When they finish, they go to sleep and I tell to her brother and he was crying. He say, if she ask me this, what I tell her? What I can say? Where is my mum, where is dad? They are safe because they have an uncle here. But other people like in Aleppo and Hama, Rakah... there's always bomb like people they can't find their family because they gone. That's why. When they finish, they go to his uncle house but they didn't find the love like when they was in the family because there is no mum, no dad to save you, because you go to uncle house. His wife... no good. Because she say this will... take like everything from me, all the love, money. If I got anything, they will take. She like angry for them.

J: This is your friend, is it?

D: But I know nothing about him because he gone... I don't know where he is.

J: Ok... So if I can go back to your story, at this point you were in Lebanon?

D: Yeah. Yeah.

J: How long were you in Lebanon for and what was it like?

D: We go in Lebanon, we stay like half day or fifteen hour. We waiting for plane. We go from Lebanon to Romania. We stay... ten days. Over ten. Some people they stay six month, waiting to come here because they do check for DNA or... I don't know, if they sick.

J: What was it like in Romania? What kind of place were you staying in?

D: They called errr... err... (4)... in Iraq you know.. or Syria, they go like this... [hand gesture to show a shelter under something small]. Khaimah... I don't know what they call them.

J: Like a... like a tent?

D: A caravan... caravan. Sorry, not caravan, but big for like... safe people. Like present... but it's not present. Like place of present. We got freedom inside but we can't go out because we are not Romanian.

J: Was it like a... like a refugee camp.?

D: Yeah yeah camp. Yeah camp. They call it camp in English? A refugee camp but it was nice. It was good. But... I.. I... I've got someone in this camp... he was there five years, six years because his... he say Iraq they will kill me, not people, like the army like this. He say because I am... I was With Saddam Hussain, he say. I was with Saddam Hussain that's what. He tell me he will stay here five years... no five year, he will stay here. I will go to Israel, is OK, but I won't go out from here. He do this... (inaudible). Now he gone to Allemagne... Germany. I know another family who stay here three years 'til now. We stay

ten month... was hard because some people they come after... they go... some them like crazy because they take everything from them. Somebody he come to give food for everybody some people take the food and put them in the room.

J: How long were you in this refugee camp in Romania?

D: Ten days or eleven days.

J: Ten or eleven days, OK.

D: But it was OK. No problem.

J: Did it feel safer that being in Iraq and in Syria.

D: Of course. When they say go I was crying because it was a good place.

J: Was there a lot of emotion in your family? Lots of tears?

D: Yeah yeah.

J: What did it feel like... because you were fifteen at the time?

D: Yeah... I'm fifteen.

J: What did it feel like as a fifteen year old seeing your mum, your dad and your brothers with all those emotions and the happiness? How were you feeling at the time?

D: Yeah... I feeling good because some people my age or under or older they lost his family from the war. I got my cousin, my uncle... he lives, when the.. the army take him in Iraq in 2006. They take him and to now we don't know. He had five girls... no boys... five girls... and his wife. Now there is no good. There is hard for them to live. Now it's good because their mum is getting married and two or three girls are getting married and that's good for them. But we missed our uncle and they missed their dad. They live one year like this... she don't know anything about their dad.

J: Oh no... it sounds like you almost feel quite lucky in a sense that you've still got your parents, compared to ... is your uncle your mum's brother or your dad's brother?

D: My dad's brother and his brother as well, they kill him. He was drinking... he was fixing this one [points at radiator].

J: A radiator?

D: Yeah... like a radiator. And he was... he got his work and he finished at night. He gone back and gone to his friend. I not sure about this because I kid and I never ask my dad because no good for them because his brother... they killed his brother. There was a fight and he was... he was... like... a gun. Because maybe he take from his friend... I don't know. He want from them money and they didn't give him. They say we will kill you, they take out the gun and my uncle he take the gun and he was sh... he was started like... trying to have safe... and when he finish, they kill him. They come and kill him. (inaudible). When this happen in 2006, they sent for my dad message like in the post they tell him if you no go out this country, we will kill you, we will kill your family. We will like... we will do

everything... sorry... everything is no good for you. If you no go out of this country, we will kill you. And my dad... only son... grandma.

J: Your dad was the only son to your grandma?

D: Yes... they kill two son and only him.

J: So, who killed them?

D: One, my uncle he dead... he...

J: Was it the army or...?

D: No army... other people. He want from them money and he didn't give them money. And my uncle some time he was drinking. And he take the gun, he started tell him take my money. When he finish... his gun finish, they kill him. I've got another uncle. I was... I remember this. I was in my dad shop and I sit outside and the army... they called like {inaudible} mehdi in Iraq, like three or four cars they come in front of my dad's shop and they take my uucnle from like another shop. Like you go out, fifteen minute, ten minute. They take him and they come back same road and when they come back, they tell me like this. I don't know... I was kid... like.. after, they say they take your uncle. They say to my dad, they take your brother, like this. 'til now we don't know anything about them.

J: It sounds like you've been through a lot at a very young age really.

D: Yeah, my story like... is... no like some people. Some people they loss their family when they kids. My story no like them. I say my story is good, because I've got my family and my grandmother... she's got his son. She got one son saved and she waiting for the other son. The army take him. She say he will come back, he will come back. That's why she say to my dad, go out from the country because if they kill you, I haven't got any son left.

J: Wow.

D: and after, my dad go to Kurdistan. My aunty she get married to a Kurdish guy and they stay like one month like this. We waiting for the passport and we go. In this time, only me and my dad to Kurdistan. My mum and my brothers, they go to uncle house... my mum brother. They sell everything in the house to get money to go to the Syria because we haven't money good. And after one month, they come, everything finished, the passport. We got some money to like start in Syria to my dad, get a job like this and we go. Ten year... like ten years, we never gone... only for two month and we don't know anything about my uncles. I've got my grandfather, get married three. I know only the uncle this dead and this one is gone... I don't know about him and two aunty from same mother and another uncles from this I know only one.

J: Your grandad married three times?

D: Yes... my dad is the youngest in the family. I got my cousin. He's 75... like this. His son is older than my dad.

J: Wow... that's really interesting. Do you want to get a drink of water or something?

D: Yeah, please.

J: I think there should be a glass in there. And if there isn't... no there isn't. Do you want to come through with me?

D: Should I go to toilet, please?

J: Yeah, course you can.

[J and D leave room] [Inaudible].

[approximately three-minute break]

[J re-enters room]

[approximately one minute break]

[D re-enters room]

J: Come on through... there's a glass of water there for you.

D: Thank you very much.

[D sits back down and drinks water]

J: Ok, you can carry on wherever you want really or we can take a break for a few minutes. It's up to you.

D: No it's OK.

J: OK, so in your story, you were telling me how you were in Romania and you'd been there for eleven days and then you were talking about what happened next.

D: Yeah... Can I talk?

J: Yeah.

D: After the ten or eleven days in Romania, we go to Germany. We stay one hour, two hour. We waiting for plane and we come to England in 11. 10. 2015. When we come, like.. the Refugee Action, they come to... they say we'll come like this. My daddy was crying and my brothers was crying. They ask him 'why you are crying?'. He say because now I am saved. There is no war, no someone trying to kill me or do anything to my kids like this... and he say I am come here to get good future for my kids and my family. [inaudible]. I am scared in Syria. There is bomb and they try to kill him like this. They say it's ok... relax; and they give him a bottle of water. The taxi was come and we go home and they say 'this is your home'. My dad... he was crying as well when go in the home. He find this good home, not like how it was in Syria where we moved three or four time. In Syria, the guy say you have to have a lot of money but we had no money because we were waiting for UN. [inaudible]. When we come here, we go like... they give the money the house, everything good, we saved. We come here only for the saved. There is no problem, no bomb, no war, no anything... and here the electric is twenty-four seven. In Syria there was only electric two or three... hour.

J: There was only electricity two to three hours a day in Syria?

D: Yes. And the water was well is twenty-four seven. In Syria we have to pay for water and sometimes were are waiting one day, half day, two days and we having black water. We take from next door like this. We pay for water fifty pound... like this. We come here everything is good, the powers, the taxis here. In Syria, the taxis say if you haven't got a lot of money, you can't come in. [inaudible]. We find here friends, school. School here is easier than Syria. In Syria, it was hard.

J: School was harder in Syria?

D: Yeah because they give you like fifteen books to put on your back and you have to bring everyday with you. And like... another book like this one. [D points at my notepad]. For every class... you have to bring like this one.

J: Like a notepad?

D: Yeah. And this was too heavy. The school start from seven to twelve but here like why I don't know why from eight or nine to three.

J: Do you prefer it from nine to three?

D: Yeah and here I go to the college. It was easier. In Syria, some people... they have to pay. If he haven't like GCSE or anything is not good... forty percent or he go for like electrico... not whatever he want. Maybe he can go... Like... (4)... a teacher, but it's no good. Only for children from year one or year two.

J: If you don't get good GCSEs, there is less choice for what you can do at college?

D: Yes. I got my friends, he haven't got the GCS good, they choose for him electrico.

J: Did you go to school in this country or did you go straight to college?

D: Yeah first I come to this school [points at internal wall to indicate that he studied at this centre] like I stay one month, one and a half and then I go to the school Smalltown\* St Catherine's Academy for six month. After that, it was good I improve my English, it was good. After this, I finish it... I'm... I'm going errr... when I finish this school, I was go to the college. That college was good. Smalltown\* college, my English was better than school. In school, I got my friends to translate to me like this and I no trying speaking in school because I got my friend to translate to me.

J: Is he also Iraqi, your friend?

D: yeah... yeah yeah. She has... girl. And my brother 'til now. He there one year and six month and he can't speak English properly like me. He is only 'hi, hello, how are you', like this. Because in college there are a lot of English people like in the same class, and from like Iraq and Ethiopian, Pakistan, Indian people. That's good to improve your English because if you are with people from same country you can't improve your English. My English is better than before. Its good, I can speak and I passed my exams good.

J: You do speak English very well, very fluently. You've only been here for one year and ten months and started learning English you said. I wouldn't have guessed that at all from how well you speak English. You said at this point that you went to Smalltown\* St Catherine's and then you started college. Erm... how did it feel to come to Smalltown\*, a very different town to how I imagine it was like for you before. New neighbours, new people in your community who live around you... how did that feel?

D: Yeah of course...when we came here it was snow. Some kids... British kids, they was throw the snow at the window and they say we don't need like... you are Muslims, you are Pakistanis, like this. We don't need you... move from there. They were swearing like this [D imitates people sticking their middle finger up]. I was go out, me and my dad... we were shouting. This time I can't speak good English, not too much. When I come this country, I can speak a little bit English. My dad was speaking Arabic... 'til now he can't speak English because in Iraq he left school in year six or year five. When he finish, I can translate to some of what he say. He say 'why are you doing this? We are here for safe. I will call the police.' Sorry about this... they say 'fuck the police'. The police they can't do anything to me... like this. The refugee guy, they come to my house and say next time they do like that, call the police. They do it, we call the police and the police he come and we tell him everything and he say we will stop him but he came back three or four times. The last time he come, with his family, he smoke and eat and put his rubbish in my garden. My dad, he can't do anything to them because they are women and girls. In this country, if you don't have a photo or anything of them, you can't do anything. Here they save the woman more than the man. My dad, he see one guy throw a can of beer at us and my dad say he will call the police and everyone. Why he do that? My dad go out to shout him. My dad was shouting for them and I translate for him and say 'Why you throw this? Always you throw this.' The woman from next door she come out and say I don't know... she is lying. I don't know... I will tell him. She bring the old people like eighteen, the girls and one guy. The guy who when we come this country he throw the snow. They do the same thing and we call the police, we call Smalltown\* at home. They say we send a message and we'll see ... I don't know what they say in English... we will talk with them. [inaudible]. She will come alone... police station to talk with her and she will go.... 'order order'... what you call it?

45 min

J: The judge?

D: yeah the judge. They say the Smalltown\* at Home, they will go to the judge and they will find what to do but they not doing anything. They still throw the rubbish like this but my dad say I can't say anything because I call the police four times for them and they don't do anything.

J: When you first came to the country, you had a lot of negative comments and things that had happened to you. How did that make you feel? Did you still feel a part of Smalltown\*? Did you feel like people didn't want you there? How did it make you feel?

D: Yeah, my dad he say 'we think here is safe but here is not safe.' .... sorry.... Yeah... he say because we are no speak English that's why he can't call the refugee action guy because they can't translate and the guy is throwing the snow at the night and we haven't any number... British number, like this. The next day, my dad say to the Refugee Action guy... can you stay here like this? You think it safe but it is not safe, but the refugee guy, she say OK no worries. If anything happen next time, just call the police. After nine months, ten months, you will move from this house... no worries. He say OK. But now it's good. If they do anything, my dad call the police. They tell him last time, if you do anything, we kick you out of the house. We tell him we need to move from this house but we didn't find house near to Smalltown\* town centre. All the houses we find too far and the bus, they come .... One hour... like this. That's why we stay in this house. My dad... he got disk slip like this... he can't walk properly, since he was born. They find out in this country. In Syria, he cant walk all the time... he got bike. When he come here, they say you got disk. They do operation in Syria but it's no good the leg. They try to fix him but no good. He got stick.

J: Oh dear... so he's using a walking stick at the moment?

D: Yes.

J: So you had a hard time when you first came to England and there was a lot going on for you, even with your neighbours and everything. What made you feel happy and safe?

D: Because I find friends here. Like Arabic friends. We ask them why they do this. They say it's OK, when they come here, they do the same thing, we call the police and the police stop this. They say don't worry... they don't kill you, because the police will catch them and put them in prison. My dad... he will be like, not safe, but good. He say it's ok because the police will save us.... They come in two minute... five minute. He say this to tell his family that it's OK for me and my brothers not to worry. If anything happens, we'll call the police.

J: To try to make you feel safer?

D: Yes.

J: Did anything else make it hard for you when you came here? You said your neighbours made it quite hard for you to feel happy. What there anything else that you think made it a little bit hard for you?

D: Yeah... (5)... I dunno. The area we were living... not all the people, some of the people from twenty, down... they were... racist. They hate Muslims because they think we are taking his money, we are taking his country, like this.

J: Ok... and where did you hear this? From one person or do you think people generally think like this?

D: No... there is... when we come first time... He throw at us and say GO OUT FROM THERE and he was swearing. He say you are Pakistani, we don't need you... like this. You are Muslim.... Go out from here. Go out from this country. I don't remember all the talk because I can't understand English then. He say you are Pakistani, you are Muslim... go

out.... Like this. Everyone I know them... my friends, Arabic friends, British, they say this area is no good. Its racist and no good for people who come first time to this country. That's true... it's no good. The old people next door from the left, they help. They say hello. On Halloween, new year, they sent a message. But from twenty to down on my street, they no good. They think Muslims no good... say we are terrorist, ISIS, kill people. That's what they think. That's what they are saying.

J: So, there were people near where you were living who were saying negative things to you for looking Pakistani and being Muslim. Did that make you feel more a part of the Muslim community or the Pakistani community? How did that make you feel?

D: I feel that is .... There is good and there is no good. There is good because some Muslim people, like Da'esh say they are Muslims and... when war happens like before, ISIS say they are Muslims. It tells to everyone that the Muslims are no good. The Muslim... the Islam is only for the kill and everything is no good, but Islam is not like this. Before like when I was a kid, I didn't know what was a Christian. I got a friend who was a Christian but I didn't know he was a Christian. When I watch... like... the movie, I used to think the Christian people are no good... what do they think about Muslim? But I didn't know my friend was Christian. In Ramadhan, I said 'let's go to the mosque' and he said 'I can't go to the mosque'. I said 'why'? he said 'I am Christian?' I say 'Are you Christian? Are you really Christ(h)ian?' He said 'yes'. I say 'You not trying to kill me?' He said 'no, why?'. This time I said to myself, not all Christians are not good. They have good people, like my friend, who are better than some Muslims. I removed the idea that Christians are no good. But he said that Christian people and all the world think that Islam is terrorists and ISIS but the terrorists are not Islam. Islam does not talk about kill people, kill the women, kill the kids. In Islam it says to save the women, the kids, the man... everyone. Islam says save the Christian people... save everyone... don't kill people. If you kill him, Allah will ask you 'why you kill him?'. Like... it's like... errr... (4)... they called a rooh. [D points at self].

J: Soul? Spirit?

D: Yes... spirit. Allah will ask you why you kill the spiri... spirit? Is good?

J: Yes, spirit.

D: Allah will ask why you kill another spirit? You can't kill her... him. Islam is not for kill people. It's for save others. Before, the nabi as'salaat us'salaam said to the Christian people, who read and write to teach the Muslim people to read and write Arabic.

J: That's very interesting. You told me that you used to watch films when you were in Iraq and Syria and how sometimes those films showed Christians as bad people.

D: Yeah.

J: Some would say that how the media shows people, means that you can have a negative, or bad view about them. So, when you saw films with Christians as bad people, it made you think that Christians are bad people. Do you think that... some TV and films in this country show Muslims as bad people?



D: Sorry, say again?

J: You said that watching films where Christians were shown as bad people made you think that they were bad people. Do you think that some of our TV and films show Muslims as bad people?

D: Yes. Of course. Some people like Da'esh who cut people's head took picture and video for him and put it on YouTube and Facebook and Instagram like this, that's why they think... other people, not just Christian... that Islam is no good. If they go to read about Islam and search about Islam, they find that it is about saving the people and not for the kill. He will try to save you so that when you die, you don't go to the hell, you go to the Jannah. The people only see this video but they don't see the good things about the Muslims. That's why they think Islam is no good.

J: OK. Thank you. So, now you are seventeen... when you came to the country you were fifteen and you started at Smalltown\* St Catherine's Academy. You said that there were lots of things happening for you. You were worrying about your uncle, your grandma... you've seen lots of horrible things and lots of violence and then you came to this country. Think about the first day you went to school, you sat down, your teachers knew almost nothing about you and your story.

D: They didn't know anything about me.

J: Ok. If I was your teacher on your first day at school, what would you want your teacher to know about you... what do you wish they knew about you to have helped you?

D: Just ... Just in 2006 I moved to Syria. I say this everyone... because of the war. We live in Syria... it was no good but good like... I got good friends, I got school and I come here. That's what I was saying.

J: Would you want them to know anything else about you? Anything more they could do to help you? What else could school have done to help you, to learn and feel like you belonged?

D: Where?

J: At Smalltown\* St Catherine's.

D: When I was studying at Smalltown\* St Catherine's I don't know anything because I can't speak English. When I came to the school, I had no book, anything... maybe just a pen like this [D picks up my pen]. They will teach you in the school. Here I don't know anything what they doing or what they trying to teach me. This happen every day... one month.... Then I understand this country. In school there is no one to force. In Syria, if you don't pass the class, you stay in the same class maybe two year or three year. You can't got to the other class if you don't pass. In this country, you can go to the next class, if you score zero. In college, it's different. In the school, they teach you about life... how is the life. What we can do in the future... like this. In college, they teach you to get a job in the future. No... if you fail in the exam, you stay in the same place. If you pass the exam, you will get a good job like this. In the college, you talk about your future, like this. How you

can get a job, how you can go to university. That is what I understand from the college and the school.

J: OK. Do you know what I mean by the word 'identity'?

D: Identity? [B shakes head].

J: If I said to you now how do you describe yourself at seventeen, how would you describe yourself as a person? Do you identify as a young British man or do you feel like a strong Iraqi identity? Do you feel strongly about being Muslim, or about being from Smalltown\*. Identity means how you would describe yourself and what things are really important to you as a person.

D: I... erm... I'm born in Iraq... and I can say this many time... I am Iraqi guy and I can say I'm Iraqi and Syrian. I lived in Syria for ten years. I can't forget about this because they saved me and saved my family. When the war has happened, they have got more problem because the mafia come to this country. If anyone asks me where I come from, I say I come from Iraq and Syria. In Iraq, before we had Saddam Hussain. He was trying to save his country but other countries don't need him because they want to steal like oil and gold from him. When he was gone in 2003, I was three years... the Iraq was gone. It was not safe... everyday there was bombs, bombs... a thousand people... they were dead. I say I'm Iraqi... it's a strong country. 'til now we try to save the country. Saddam Hussein is gone...they kill him in 2006. But Iraq... Iraqi people, they strong, because now ...like in Syria, the ISIS, Da'esh... they are there six year. In Iraq, they only there two year and half and we tell him 'go out' and we kill him. Some Iraqi people go to help Syrian people and Turkish people. Before, Saddam Hussein say he will go to help Palestine but they kill him. He send thirty nine jet to Israel and he say to all the Arab... like... I don't know what they call them... the boss of the country to send one, only one to Israel because I sent 39... and nobody sent. But they kill him because he was trying to save all the Arab people. Now he's gone... now all the problems happen.

J: Yeah... it was a big event that happened in Iraq... for everybody around the world, especially for people like living in Iraq. Obviously, the UK was part of that war and it sounds like you feel... quite positively ... in a good way about Saddam Hussein and you think that killing him was the wrong thing to do?

D: Yeah. When they kill him... I can't say the names of the people who kill him. [inaudible] but before in Iraq was safe. Everyone, like the Shia, Sunni, Christian, was like a family, not like a fight. Everyone can like... go out in the night, but now nine o'clock, eight o'clock, older people like my dad's age cannot go out. Before, if anyone steal, he cut his hand because in Islam, it say if anyone steal everything, cut off his hand because it's no good to steal from the people. But he was good and Iraq was safe. People tried to kill the Iraqi people and he said no, you can't kill the Iraqi people, but he said no you can't do anything to the Iraqi people and the Arab people.

J: Can I ask what you feel about the UK and the war it had with Iraq?

D: The UK is good... now the UK is good than Iraq.

J: Yeah... In 2003 when the war broke out in Iraq, you said you were living them.

D: Yeah... bombs every day.

J: Yeah... and some of them may have been American bombs and some may have been British bombs. Now you live in Britain, which is a country which dropped some of those bombs. How does that make you feel?

D: It make me feel no good but I'm here and I'm in this country to find safe. That's why I'm here. If I was in my country, maybe I would have died some day or next day... I don't know. But when I come to this country and when I took the British passport and when I finish the uni, I want to find work in an Arabic country like Dubai, Abu Dhabi... Saudi Arabia.

J: So, you're hoping to live in...

B: An Arabic country, yeah.

J: Can I ask why you feel that you want to live in an Arabic country?

B: Because I think that is my family. Because here I can't say this is my family with British people because sometimes I try to talk with someone, he think I am a terrorist, I am trying to hurt him and he will move away from me.

J: OK... Do you think it's hard being a young refugee and a Muslim refugee in this country?

D: Here, in England, they think that all the Muslim are terrorist. You know what happened in Manchester one month... two three month ago? It was a Muslim, but he was born here. He was a British guy with British passport. I don't know why he do that.

J: Does it make you feel less safe when you hear of these stories?

D: Yes, of course. Because when this happened, my dad he called me and told me to come early home because maybe British people will kill you. When I come here in Smalltown\*, somebody... they kill woman or man. They cut his neck like this [D imitates somebody having their throat slit]. And I say I won't believe in this because it's a safe country and that's why I came here because it's safe... but it was true ... and my dad said don't come late... ten o'clock like this, come early. The area I live is not good... they hate Muslim people. Not only Muslim people but they hate people who come from another country, like African people, even Christian.

J: Hmmm... You said before when we talked about identity that you are Iraqi, and you are Syrian, and you say that you are Muslim which is a strong part of your identity.

D: Yeah.

J: Do you feel British at all?

D: I'm British? No... [D smiles and shakes his head].

J: Do you think anything could make you feel more British?

D: No, because when I try to say I am British, they say you are not British... like this. That's what they try to say.

J: Who is 'they'?

D: Oh...Everyone. Sometimes I'm going to the bus station and go to Manchester and they ask me where I come from and I say Smalltown\* and they say no, no, where do you come from? You are not British. Where you come from? What country? I was sat like this and I say 'why'? And he say 'No, I'm just asking'. I said 'I come from Iraq and Syria... what do you think now?' Then he no talk to me. I said 'You happy now?'. If I see you next time and you ask me, I will say I am from Smalltown\*. In this country, when you go to another city, you say I am from Smalltown\*. If you go to London, you say I am from Manchester. [inaudible]. He trying to ask you what country you come from, you say I am from Pakistan, Indian, Syria Iraq, Palestine, Egypt... like this.

J: Uh-huh, OK. You said earlier that when you're older, you want to go live in an Arab country.

D: Yeah because in an Arab country, they respect you.

J: Is there anything that you think would help you to feel more British and make you want to live here?

D: Yes... when I get a British passport [D laughs].

J: Apart from getting a British passport, is there anything else that would make you want to stay and live in the UK and get a job here and work here?

D: Of course. I've got my friend who lives in Devon\* and he say, why are you living in Smalltown\*? I tell him we come first time, they say we live in Smalltown\*. He said come to Turkey... sorry Devon\* and see the people and you will say I like the British people. Not here... here is no good. Here is no city life... Smalltown\* is in place of city... no city. He say you will find British people... the good British people... the original British people. Not here like racist... they hating Muslim. In Devon\* you will be happy. [inaudible] I tell him OK... when I will be eighteen, I will go move... I will go live there. I will leave Smalltown\* and go there.

J: So you're thinking of moving to Devon\*? Great

B: Yeah... Because he say uni there is good. 'Cause Smalltown\* uni... Smalltown\* University is no good for another countries. That's what I think.

J: What are you hoping to study at university?

B: I want to be in the future, a doctor.

J: Great. That's a really good aspiration to have and I wish you the best of luck for that. Is there anything else that you want to share with me, or...?

B: No... that's all fine.

J: Thank you very much for coming, I really, really appreciate it. I'm going to stop recording now.

Emile\* Tauba\* transcription

Date: 29<sup>th</sup> January

Location: Islamia Academy

Year group: 11

Age: 16

--- Abstract

--- Orientation

--- Complicating action

--- Result/ resolution

--- Evaluation

--- Coda

J: Hi. Thank you for coming to talk to me today. I just want to start off by asking you a little bit about your background and who you are.

E: Ok. My name's Emile\* Tauba\*. I'm sixteen years old. I live in Smalltown. I come to Islamia Academy School.

J: Thank you. Could you tell me a little bit about where you were born and where your family come from.

E: My family come from Sudan to Egypt. I born in Egypt.

J: Could I ask why your family moved from Sudan to Egypt.

E: Because war... war in Sudan.

J: Uh-huh. Have you got any siblings? Any brothers and sisters?

E: Yes I have one brother and sister.

J: Can you tell me about what life was like in Egypt? Because you lived in Egypt for...

E: Fourteen years.

J: Uh-huh, most of your life you lived in Egypt. So what was it like? What was the place like?

E: It was good like... but there was a little bit of racism in there.

J: Ok. Do you want to tell me more about that? Who was it coming from?

E: Egyptian people.

J: What sort of things were said to you?

E: They say you're black and stuff like that.

J: Were there a lot of people from Sudan where you were living?

E: Yeah... [inaudible].

J: So obviously, after living there for fourteen years, you then came to the UK. How did you guys come to the UK and what was that journey like?

E: By plane... yeah.

J: OK. I want to find out more about what happened when you came to the UK. So you were... fourteen and you came with your brother and your sister?

E: Yeah.

J: Who else was with you?

E: My mother and father.

J: OK. So as a fourteen-year-old boy who had lived most of his life in Egypt, you arrived in the UK. How did it feel?

E: Good... like... it's good like... it's different, innit...

[School staff member enters room]

J: Sorry. If we go back a step to when you were in Egypt and your parents told you that you were coming to the UK, how did it feel to hear that?

E: I feel like happy... yeah.

J: Why did you feel happy? What did you think it would be like?

E: New country. New people.... Maybe good than Egypt.

J: Had you heard a lot about the UK before?

E: Yeah but not too much.

J: Had you heard good things about it or not so good things?

E: Good things.

J: Ok... so you came to the UK, your plane landed... tell me about what happened after that.

E: We went by taxi to home and I was so happy when I come here. First time I travel by plane.

J: when you arrived at your new home, what was that like?

E: Good... tidy.

J: Was there anybody around to help you when you arrived?

E: Yes... they were people who help me.

J: What sort of things did they help you with?

E: They were showing us the way, the places.

J: OK... did they show you anything else?

E: They showed us how to deal with people.

J: OK. Did they help you to find a school as well?

E: Yes.

J: What was your new area like? What were your neighbours like?

E: They good.... Good people, yeah.

J: OK. And was it easy to make new friends or...

E: First it was hard because I didn't have English so I couldn't speak with people.

J: Has it become easier now that you can speak English?

E: Yeah.

J: Ok. Is there anything else that you think could have helped you more when you came to the country?

E: If I.... Go back?

J: If you came to the country now, what would help you to make you feel more settled? What help do you think you'd need?

E: I'm not sure.

J: You're not sure- OK. Could I ask you about your identity and who you are as a person?

E: Erm...

J: For example, my identity might be that I'm British, my parents are from Pakistan so that's part of my identity. I come from a religious Muslim family and I think that's part of my identity. I work in research and as a psychologist so that's part of my identity. All of these things are part of who I am as a person or part of my identity. If I was to ask you about your identity, what would you say?

E: I'd say my identity... like my name is Emile\* Tauba\*. I come from a Christian family. I used to live in Egypt but I'm from Sudan originally. I live in Smalltown. I come to ISLAMIA academy. I'm in year 11... doing my GCSEs.

J: OK. Is there anything else that you think is important to you?

E: No.

J: OK. You said you were originally from Sudan. Do you feel Sudanese, do you feel more British or do you feel none of those things?

E: I feel like I'm Sudanese.

J: OK. Do you feel British at all?

E: No.

J: [Inaudible] What do you think would make you feel more British? Do you want to feel more British?

E: English...

J: Learning to speak English a little better?

E: Yeah.

J: Anything else?

E: No.

J: Ok. You said you are from a Christian family. Is that important to you? Are you quite religious?

E: Yeah.

J: OK. Obviously you attend an Islamic school. How do you feel coming from a Christian family and to an Islamic school where almost all the pupils are Muslims?

E: It feel like easy because in Egypt, my friends all were Islam, so I don't feel like something different.

J: Do you think it's easier for you to come to a school like this where there are pupils from Muslim backgrounds or would it have been easier to go to a school with mainly White British or Christian students?

E: Muslim.

J: OK. So, you're now sixteen and you're doing your GCSEs which is a big step. What are you hoping to do in the future?

E: When I grow up?

J: Yeah.

E: I want to be an engineer.

J: An engineer? That sounds good. What kind of engineer?

E: Like building and construction.

J: Great. Do you see yourself in the future living here in Smalltown or Egypt or Sudan or somewhere else in the world?

E: Somewhere else.

J: Where can you imagine yourself living?

E: Maybe in England but not in Smalltown. [Inaudible]

J: Ok... so if there was somebody else who was fourteen and coming to the UK as a refugee, what advise would you give to them?

E: Say to them to learn... and how to deal with people here... like that.

J: Learn to speak English? Learn in general?

E: Learn in general. That will help you here.

J: What do you mean by learn to deal with people?

E: Like... I don't know.



J: OK. You mentioned earlier that you and your family faced racism in Egypt. That must have been very hard for you. When you came to England, did you have similar experiences when you came here in terms of facing racism?

E: Yes.

J: Can you tell me a bit more about that?

E: Like they swearing at us innit. They say the N word and things.

J: OK. Was this at home, in school, on streets? Where was this happening?

E: Outside.

J: And what would you do if people called you the N word or other things?

E: Just leave them.

J: How does it feel to hear that? As you said, you came here having heard lots of good things about England and you were very happy you were coming but then you came here and had some people calling you these words. How did that feel?

E: I feel bad.

J: Did you tell anybody about it?

E: No.

J: Did people around you know that you were refugees? Did anybody say anything about that?

E: No.

J: Do people in school know anything about your background?

E: Only some friends.

J: OK. Do you like talking about your background and the fact you're from Sudan, lived in Egypt and why you came to the UK?

E: I can say it to people.

J: You are happy to say it to people? OK. So, in the next few years, do you want to be seen as somebody who is a British person and forget the refugee status and background or do you want to remember the fact that you are a refugee?

E: I want to remember.

J: Do you think it's important to remember?

E: Yeah.

J: Why do you think it's important to remember?

E: Because then you forget?

J: What happens if you forget?

E: Don't know.

J: Is there anything else that's important to you?

E: When I grow up, to go to work, work in buildings.

J: So it's important for you to have a future and have a working life afterwards? Would you like to buy your own house?

E: Yes.

J: OK. Is there anything else that you want to tell me about your experiences that you think is important?

E: No.

J: OK. Well thank you for coming to speak to me today. I'm going to stop the recording there.

Kaiser Sana Gulrauz transcription

Date: 29<sup>th</sup> January

Location: Essa Academy

Year group: 11

Age: 16

--- Abstract

--- Orientation

--- Complicating action

--- Result/ resolution

--- Evaluation

--- Coda

J: Hi Kaiser. I'm Jawad Shah, as I just said earlier. We've been talking a little bit about what we're doing here today. So... could you start off by telling me a little bit about your background and who you are.

K: I come from Somalia and I come here with my family and also, I am happy here to stay.

J: OK, that's good. So, can you tell me a little bit about life in Somalia? So, you were born in Somalia? You went to school in Somalia?

K: Yeah. Life in Somalia it was hard. It's hard how to learn and every time like something happen, you can't know when something gonna happen to you... all that.

J: You said you never know when something is going to happen to you. What do you mean by that? What could have happened?

K: Like it might happen fire... or the bomb. It might happen fight... all that.

J: There might be fights? Was there a lot of fighting happening in Somalia when you were there?

K: Yeah when I was there, yeah.

J: So, who was fighting? Was it people locally fighting? Was it the army fighting? What was happening?

K: People were fighting, yeah.

J: Ok. Did you feel safe in Somalia?

K: No...

J: Ok. So, you live with your family and your family came to the UK with you?

K: Yeah.

J: Who's in your family? Who came to the UK with you?

K: My mum and my brother and my sister.

J: Your mum, your brother and your sister? OK.

K: Yeah.

J: How old were you when you came to the UK?

K: Fourteen... yeah.

J: So, when you were thirteen or fourteen and you had just found out that you were coming to the UK, what did that feel like?

K: I feel happy and ... and I say like your life is gonna be changed... all that.

J: Did you say that or did your mum say that to you?

K: My mum, she says to me that.

J: That your life is going to change?

K: Yeah all that... and UK is more safer than Somalia.

J: How did you imagine life would be in the UK?

K: I imagine like... it's gonna be good... and it still is good.

J: That's good. So how did you travel to the UK?

K: Plane.

J: You came on a plane straight to the UK?

K: Yeah.

J: Ok... so your plane lands and you get through the airport... you're about to go to your new house. How are you feeling?

K: I was feeling happy, but I'll say it was like different. Different people... different everything... everything was different. I was feeling a bit sad and I was saying like, you're gonna see new people, different people, different life, all that.

J: Yeah... OK. You seem happy that you were going to start a new life.

K: Yeah.

J: Erm... Were you missing anything? Did a small part of you think 'I want to go back to Somalia'? Or did you think 'I need to focus on England now'?

K: I miss my people over there, but I say I have to focus here.

J: Ok... So, you were driving to your new house, you came outside your new house. What was it like? What does it feel like? Is it very different to Somalia?

K: Yeah, it's a big difference to Somalia. The houses are all different. I said like 'wow, we found a good house, good life... all that.' It was a big difference.

J: Uh-huh, so...was there anyone there to help you?... Moving anywhere new is hard because you didn't know the language, the city, the area... everything was new to you. Was there anybody there to help you to feel settled?

K: Yeah.

J: Who was there to help you?

K: The social... w...

J: Social workers?

K: Yeah.

J: What sort of things were they helping with?

K: Helping like how to go shopping... all that, how to talk to the people and how the people they are. They were telling us all that.

J: OK. Erm...was there anything else you wish they would have done to help you more?

K: The rule... how to talk to the neighbour... all that.

J: OK. Can I ask you about your neighbours? What were you neighbours like when you came new?

K: They was good.

J: Were they helpful?... Did they help you?

K: Yeah.

J: What sort of things were they helping you with?

K: They helping us how to go everything, how to go shop... they tell us don't shout because the neighbours might get angry, upset and call the police... they told us all that.... Don't do that.

J: So, they were telling you to help you to go to the shop but also not to make too much noise, so people don't get angry and upset?

K: Yeah.

J: Did that feel very different to life in Somalia?

K: Yeah.

J: Ok... So, you then started school. Did you start at this school straight away or did you go to a different school?

K: Different school.

J: Ok so a different school and then you came to this school afterwards? So, what did it feel like to go to school?

K: I was happy, and I was saying like... you can learn something. The schools are different in Somalia and the UK. There it was... if you mess about, the teacher will hit you but it's not here. You have to focus and no one is gonna hit you... and the teachers they was good... very good.

J: Uh-huh. Did the teachers help you to learn the language as well?

K: Yeah.

J: Do you think the teachers knew much about your background and Somalia and why you were here?

K: No.

J: Do you wish that the teachers did know more about your background? Do you think it would have helped you?

K: Yeah...

J: OK, so if it was your first day today and I was your first teacher that you met, what would you want to tell me? [Inaudible] You tell me about you. What sort of things would you have wanted to tell me about your background and what's important to you?

K: First of all, I will tell you where I come from and I come here to learn. Yeah...

J: Uh-huh...

K: Yeah...

J: Do you think your brothers and sisters also had similar experiences to you or did they feel differently about coming to the UK?

K: Different.

J: Different? How did they feel different about it?

K: They feel like me... different. Different life, everything... and they find it different. Different people... all that.

J: Ok.... What language do you speak at home, by the way?

K: First time we come, we speak Somali but the teachers they say when you go home, don't speak Somali, try to speak English.

J: Ok. Does your mum speak English with you or does she speak Somali?

K: No... she speaks Somali.

J: Was it hard to then go home and try to speak English when your mum couldn't understand what you were saying?

K: Yeah.

J: [Inaudible] Can I ask you a little bit about... I guess, your identity and who you are as a person? DO you know what I mean by identity?

K: Yeah... errr...

J: So, things like who you are, where you come from. So, could you tell me a bit about your identity and what sort of things are important to you?

K: Basically, I am Kaiser... my identity from Somalia. I come here to learn with my family, all that... and we had a good life and we still got a good life.

J: Good. So, you said that you're from Somalia. If I asked you in terms of your identity, do you feel Somali or do you feel British?

K: Somalia.

J: Do you think you'll always feel Somali or do you think you might start to feel British?

K: Probably Somali.

J: Ok... Do you want to feel British or do you feel happy being Somali in Britain?

K: I'm happy to be Somali.

J: Ok... Is there anything else important in your identity? Are you from a religious family? A Muslim family? A Christian family?

K: A religious family... Muslim.

J: Is that important to you?

K: Yeah.

J: Erm... do you have a Muslim community where you live? Do you live near Muslim people?

K: Yeah.

J: Do you think that's helped you to feel happy and settled or would you have preferred to be living near non-Muslim people?

K: Happy... happy, yeah.

J: Ok. How do you think... other people see around you see Muslim people?

K: They think different things. [Inaudible].

J: How do you think other people in your area think about Somali people?

K: They might think different ... and think about different stuff. All that.

J: Do you think people think positive about refugees generally or negatively?

K: They think refugee is like poor people and like they don't have anything, and they leave their country for safety to come here.... All that.

J: Ok... That's fine. So, I was to know a little bit about your future and where you want to be. You're sixteen now... So, in the future... in a few years' time, where do you see yourself? What do you want to be doing in a few years?

K: I want to be a businessman.

J: What sort of business do you want to be doing?

K: Like... erm... (4)... work... and make money.

J: Work and make money? Ok, that's good. Do you see yourself living here in the UK, in Smalltown? DO you see yourself living in Somalia... or somewhere else?

K: I can see living in London.

J: London? Great... have you been to London?

K: No.

J: No but you want to go and visit and maybe live in London as well? Do you think your brothers, sisters and mum would want to live in the UK or do you think they would want to go back to Somalia?

K: My mum... she want to go back to Somalia and come back to here. She want to see like her sisters and her brothers.

J: So, she wants to go and visit her family then come back?

K: Yeah.

J: Ok... So, if there was somebody else who was fourteen and came from Somalia, what advice would you give to them?

K: It's gonna be hard for them. Like... I tell them how to talk to the neighbour, the rule... everything... the different people.

J: You said you were going to tell them about the rules. What sort of rules are important?

K: Like the people... when they are talking to people, they have to give them respect. They have to say please and something. They don't fight. If someone is bullying you, they have to ignore them.

J: if somebody is bullying you, you have to ignore them?

K: Yeah.

J: Did you face any bullying here?

K: No.

J: Any of your brothers and sisters or other people who face bullying and have to ignore them?

K: Yeah....

J: Ok. What else do you think it important to help you feel happy and settled in the UK? What helped you feel happy here?

K: I want my family to feel happy... always happy, have a nice life, happy life, all that.

J: Yeah... When you came here, you said people helped you to settle and show you how to go to the shops and how to behave. Did people do anything that made it hard for you to feel happy?

K: No.

J: Good. So, it was quite a positive experience for you?

K: Yeah.

J: that's good to hear. If I was to take a step back to Somalia... is the life you have here what you expected to have when you were in Somalia?

K: Yeah...

J: Is it what you thought it would be like?

K: It would be like... different. A good life and safety and all that.



J: ... And is it like that for you?

K: Yeah.

J: Is there anything that you think your teachers or school could have done to help you more?

K: Yeah.

J: What could they do to make it easier for you?

K: They could help me a lot with how to learn English.

J: Ok. So, obviously you're studying at an Islamic school. Can I ask... did you choose to come to an Islamic school?

K: Yeah, I chose.

J: Why?

K: Because same me... there will be a lot of Muslim people around here. I wanna see them.

J: Do you think it's important for Muslim refugees to come to a school that has other Muslim children?

K: ... N...

J: If you're a refugee from a Muslim family, do you think it helps to come to a Muslim school?

K: Yeah.

J: How easy was it for you to make friend at this school?

K: It was easy.

J: What sort of things did you talk about that made it easy?

K: First of all, they ask you where do you come from, where do you live... all that. After you can be friends and you can know each other.

J: Good. Is there anything else you want to tell me about your journey to the UK and your life here?

K: No.

J: OK that's fine. Well thank you very much for coming to talk to me and I'm going to pause that there.

Nadeem\* Yusra\* transcription

Date: 18<sup>th</sup> December 2017

Location: Islamia Academy

Year group: 11

Age: 15

--- Abstract

--- Orientation

--- Complicating action

--- Result/ resolution

--- Evaluation

--- Coda

J: Hi Nadeem\*. As I said, my name's Jawad Shah and I'm currently doing some research at the University of Sheffield with your refugees. The first thing I want to start with is to ask you a little bit about yourself.

N: I was born in Ethiopia. I went by car to Egypt. Then from Egypt, I went to a refugee camp and then I came by aeroplane in England.

J: OK. You said you went to a refugee camp. Where was that?

N: It was in Egypt. I was first in my auntie's house but we had to go there and tell our stories because they said we had to tell our stories to go to England.

J: Are you happy to share some of those stories with me today?

N: Yes.

J: OK. I'm not going to ask you too many in-depth questions today I'll let you tell me however much you want to tell me, so you share whatever you want with me.

N: When I first came here, I didn't know English. People tried to bully me and other people who didn't know English. If you talk in your language, they would say that you're swearing and tell the teachers and the teachers would believe them.

J: How did that feel?

N: It feels bad. You need to have friends and it depends which friends you choose. Some of the people you think are friends might help you, but some might bully you.

J: Was it easy to make friends or did you find it difficult?

N: It was difficult, but I had a guy sat beside me who used to help me, so I became friends with him.

J: OK. If I could go back a step. You said you were born in Ethiopia. Are your family originally from Ethiopia?

N: My mum is from Eritrea. I'm not sure if I was born in Ethiopia. It might be Eritrea... I didn't ask my mum.

J: OK. Can you tell me a bit about your background, your childhood and your family?

N: I live with my mum and my sister. We are three people in the house.

J: OK. So, you live with your mum and your sister. You said that you went by car to Egypt. Do you know why you went from Eritrea to Egypt?

N: There was a problem. My mum said there was a problem. She didn't say why... I didn't ask her because I was a kid, so I just went to Egypt then I came here.

J: How long were you in Egypt for?

N: Three years.

J: And how old were you when you were there?

N: I was ten when I arrived there in Egypt.

J: Tell me... what was life like for you in Egypt. Were you there as refugees or did you just move there?

N: I don't know. My mum said her sister was there, so we just went to Egypt.

J: Uh-huh. What was life like in Egypt for you?

N: It was hard but there were other people there from Ethiopia, so they helped me to know Arabic.

J: OK. So, is Arabic your first language?

N: First is Eritrean. The second one is Ethiopian. The third one is Arabic. The fourth one is English.

J: Wow. I appreciate the fact that you're speaking to me in your fourth language and the effort that takes as well. So... you said you then left Egypt when you were 13?

N: Yeah, I left after my birthday party after a week.

J: So, you'd just turned 13. You said that you had to tell somebody in Egypt your story, so you could come to England.

N: We didn't have the money to come here. It was hard. So, we had to go to these people who ask about your story and they research if it's true. They try to help you to come to England or America and have a house.

J: OK. Was there a lot of pressure on you then to tell a story that was fully honest but had to make sense to the person you were telling it to? Did you feel comfortable and confident in telling your story or was it quite difficult?

N: Yeah. They ask you alone because they want to know if your mum is telling one story and you are telling a different story. I tell the truth, so they leave me. I was only 10 and didn't know what to tell them. I told them half of it and the other half I didn't want to tell them because I was scared.

J: Do you want to tell me some of that story?

N: No.

J: You don't feel comfortable telling me some of that story?

N: No.

J: OK. That's absolutely fine. So, after telling your story, they then checked that with your mum's and your sister's and decided that they were going to bring you to the UK.

N: Yeah... after the story, it took three years for them to let us come to England.

J: How did it feel? Three years of waiting.

N: It was hard for my mum. I was a kid and I had friends so it was OK, but it was hard for my mum. In the house, we don't talk about it because my mum doesn't want to talk about it.

J: Do you find it hard to talk about your time in Egypt?

N: Yeah. Now I don't talk about the past with my mum. I just talk about now and when I came to England.

J: Do you think it's easier to talk about now and since you came to England rather than talk about the past?

N: Yeah... because the past was hard and sometimes you want to forget it.

J: OK. What do you think the hardest part of the past it?

N: The hardest part was me changing a lot of houses, making new friends and then changing to other houses. I didn't know... I was just a kid. My mum would say we're changing the house so I would just say yeah. I didn't ask why.

J: It must have been very hard to have a house, make friends and feel like you belong somewhere, but then move house and lost that.

N: Yeah.

J: Do you feel like you have a sense of belonging to where you are now? Does this feel like home to you?

N: No... because we might move again.

J: If I said to you, what feels like home to you? What would you say felt like home?

N: I'd say my country because I had friends since childhood there. I still talk to them now.

J: In Ethiopia? How are you in contact with them?

N: Through Facebook. Some of them told me that some of them died.

J: I'm very sorry to hear that. It must be very hard. Is losing friends something that you had to deal with a lot when you were younger?

N: Yeah... I can't have friends that I call real friends. There's no point making real friends if you know you're going to move one day.

J: Yeah... that's an interesting point. Do you still feel like that now?

N: Yeah but now my friends are from Egypt but before they were from Sudan... they have the same story like me. They were refugees in Egypt. We met them when we went to the guys to talk about our story and now they are here.

J: Are they in the same school with you, too?

N: No. different school but near.

J: In the same area?

N: No, they're in Smalltown\* but the area is different. It's far but we still meet.

J: Do you feel like you have something in common with them? A connection with them because you have a similar story?

N: Yeah... it's not the same same but they had the same hard life as me. They changed lots of houses, they were refugees like me, they had friends in Egypt but had to change houses like me. Their story is like mine.

J: What is it about the fact they have the same story as you that means you find it easier to make friendships with them and talk to them?

N: Like... now, in this school, if I say I'm a refugee, some of them make fun of it. Some of them say he's a refugee so he's dumb. With them, I can say the truth because they have the same story as me.

J: Uh-huh. How do you think that people in school and outside of school, on your street... how do you think other people see refugees?

N: It depends on someone's personality. Some of them say you're a refugee and all that... you're here to take our jobs and all that but some of them say you're a refugee and they try to help you. Some of them try to help you but they make it harder because they tell everyone.

J: Do you not like it when people tell others that you're a refugee?

N: I don't mind it but if I have a fight with them... or like an argument, they say 'you're a refugee... what are you gonna do?'

J: That must be very hard for you [inaudible]. You said that some people try to help. What sort of things do they do for you and how does it make you feel?

N: They treat me like an equal but some of them they try to help but then they go and tell other people that I'm poor and all of that. If I wanna buy something, they might say 'nah... nah... I'll buy it for you.' I can buy it.... Thank you for the help but I can buy it. I ain't poor. I now have money so I want to buy it, I can buy it.

J: OK. If I'll come back to that in a minute. You said that there were other people who were doing the opposite and were saying that you're a refugee, you're here taking our jobs, and didn't want you to be near them. Was that in school or outside of school?

N: It was outside in town when there was an argument and they said 'you're a refugee... what are you gonna do?' My friends were with me who were refugees too and they said 'refugees or not, we're still people. Why are you behaving like that?'

J: Uh-huh. Do you think that there are more people out there who want to help you or more people who hold negative views?

N: More people want to help you but if you have an argument with them, they will then turn and say you're a refugee.

J: OK. I want to ask you a question about identity. Do you know what I mean by identity?

N: Erm... yeah.

J: Yeah... so it means sort of who you are as a person. If I said to you, how would you define your identity and describe who Nadeem\* is as a person?

N: I'm a normal fifteen-year-old boy. Just having fun and enjoying life. Nobody knows when you're going to die so you need to have fun when you can.

J: Is there any other part of your identity that you think is really important?

N: Erm...

J: You said earlier that you were Ethiopian. Do you think that's a part of your identity? Do you feel that being British or a refugee is part of your identity? People often give us labels to define our identity. How would you describe your own?

N: If someone wants to describe me, he can say he's a 15-year-old boy. He's a refugee, he came from Ethiopia and he's in England now. The first thing is that I'm a refugee here and I ain't scared of that. It depends how people say it.

J: Erm... thanks for that. Is there anything else? You said you come from Ethiopia... is there a cultural identity of a religious identity?

N: I'm Christian but when we go to Church, there's an Ethiopian church in Manchester we go to on Sundays because my mum doesn't know that much English so she goes there to understand what they say.

J: Do you think your mum finds it harder because she doesn't speak English?

N: She can listen to you and she knows what you mean but it's hard to talk for her.

J: So, when you came to this school and when you moved to this country, what things helped you and your family to feel settled and happy here?

N: My family because she knows.... I don't think they're relatives but they're from Ethiopia and they helped us when we came here. They helped us to know everything because they've been here like 10 years. That helped me because I didn't know anything. The guy who was supposed to help us, she just showed us the shop, got us a bank and that's it. If there's problem in the house, with my sister or a problem with the water, the guy was supposed to take care of us.

J: Do you know who that was?

N: She was a female... I can't remember her name.

J: Ok. What you said was you found it very helpful to have another family from Ethiopia who you had a connection with who could help you because they had been here for ten years and knew the area. Did anything else help you to feel like you could be happy, safe and content here?

N: My family... I don't know. For me, my friends, the people I hang around with and the people who helped me.

J: New friends that you made here or people that you knew from Egypt?

N: I had friends I already had from Egypt, but I also had new friends from school.

J: Is there anything that you think your teachers could have done to help you when you came to school?

N: Not so much. When you get someone from another country, it would help if there was somebody from the same country in their school because they will help them. When I came to this school, I didn't know English so I used to just shake my head when the teachers say anything. When I was new, people tried to push me around and all that but I couldn't do anything because I didn't know English and I didn't know what to say to the teacher. If they pushed me, that's it. When they pushed me hard, I might try to push them back. But when they push me with their friends, I just leave them.

J: OK. I get a sense of bullying perhaps that you're describing in school.

N: You know me... when I came here, after two or three months, a guy tried to bully me, but I fought back. After that the guy I had a fight with started being my friend but not there's a new guy who doesn't fight back so they push him and all that. He doesn't know English, so they push him about... do you know Raheem\* in this school? He doesn't know English, so he doesn't push back.

J: No... DO you think that language is a really important part of fitting in and friendships in school?

N: Yeah... do you know my friend's school... Islamia Academy\*? When he went there, they gave him a tablet so everything they said he was typing it in Google, so it would just translate, and he'd show the teacher. But me... they didn't give me anything, so I was sitting there just shaking my head if I know anything or not. (Nadeem laughs as he shakes his head).

J: OK. How long do you think it took you to learn enough English to communicate and feel confident to communicate rather than just shake your head?

N: It depends. For me, I'm a fast learner. I learned Arabic in just four months and English... after I came here, after like two or three months, I know what they're saying but I don't know how to talk. After six or seven months, I can say a lot.

J: Yeah... that's really impressive that you could learn the language so quickly. So, you've told me quite a lot about what helped such as friends, people around you and language. Was there anything that didn't help or made it worse for you? Anything that was a barrier to you feeling that you belonged?

N: It's just teachers... when you want to say something, they don't take you seriously. For example, if someone hit you in school and you told a teacher, they would just say they'll do something but they don't do anything. But, if you hit them back, if they saw you, they'll give you detention. They should take small things more seriously because small things start big fights.

J: Yeah. Anything else that you think helped or got in the way?

N: One thing that helped me is that my sister knew some English so anything I wanted, I would just tell my sister and my sister would just say it.

J: OK. Is your sister older than you?

N: Yeah, she's eighteen.

J: Right... so, you said earlier that you don't like people talking about you as a refugee all the time because you feel like in many ways you want to be a normal fifteen-year-old boy. I'm going to come back to the idea of identity a little bit. Do you feel that you are now a fifteen-year-old British boy? Do you feel a sense of Britishness to your identity?

N: No.

J: Not at all? On a scale of one to ten with ten being very British and one being not at all, where would you put yourself?

N: A two or something.

J: Could you explain why you feel that?

N: I don't know. Just like... I don't know how to explain it.

J: OK. Going forward, in the future, where do you see yourself and where do you see your life going?

N: In the future, like... I'm just like... all I think about is being an engineer because that was my dream since I was a kid. If I made it, I would build my mum a house in Ethiopia.

J: In Ethiopia?

N: Yeah... because she'd want to be with her family. She didn't see them for like five years.

J: That's a long time. Do you think your mum would want to go and live in Ethiopia?

N: I think she would, but I don't think she can.

J: Do you think you could go back and live in Ethiopia?

N: If the government lets her, she might do it because we came from Ethiopia when there was a problem, so I don't think they'll let us go back.

J: Is there anything you could do about that or is it out of your hands?

N: It's out of my hands.

J: OK... Would you like to live where you're living now or a different part of the country or a different part of the world, in the future?

N: Really, I don't know. It depends like... I don't have plans to move but there might be problems that mean I need to move.

J: OK. I want you to imagine a magical day where all the problems that existed and led you to becoming a refugee all disappeared, and the world was all open to you... where would you want to see yourself?

N: Me? In Ethiopia.... My mum would be happy there.

J: To live or just to visit?

N: Maybe visit or maybe marry an Ethiopian woman and stay there.

J: Fair enough. If you married an Ethiopian woman, would you want to live here with her or live there?



N: If my mum's there, then I will live in Ethiopia.

J: I'm guessing you're quite close to your mum.

N: Yeah.

J: Is there anybody else in your wider family?

N: I think I have cousins from my mum's side, but I don't know about them.

J: That's fine. I'm going to take a step away from you a little bit and ask about other people in general, the town that you live in and the country. What do you think people's views are about refugees?

N: Some of them think that refugees couldn't live in their own countries, so they came to find a new life in this country. Some of them say like they're taking our space. It depends how someone thinks.

J: In the area that you live... how have people generally treated you?

N: I don't know. I mainly stay in my house or meet my friends from Egypt every day after school. We don't have any friends in our area.

J: OK... have you developed friendships with people from other places other than Egypt?

N: Yeah... there are people from Congo... all kinds of countries. Mostly I like to go out with my friends from Egypt because I'm good at Arabic.

J: Yeah... you said you feel more comfortable speaking Arabic. Is there anything else about your story that you want to share with me?

N: Erm... I don't really want to talk about it.

J: That's fine. Is there anything else you want to talk about?

N: The past?

J: Past, present or future.

N: There's nothing more about the past I want to talk about. I don't want to think too much about the future.

J: OK. Well I don't have any other questions I want to ask you but if there's anything else you want to share with me, you're more than welcome to do that. Anything else that you think might be useful?

N: No.

J: Well thank you very much for coming to talk to me. I'm going to stop recording now.

Reema Al Talib (Remmy\*) Transcription

Date: 26<sup>th</sup> January 2018

Venue: School classroom

--- Abstract

--- Orientation

--- Complicating action

--- Result/ resolution

--- Evaluation

--- Coda

J: Hi Remmy\*.

R: Hi

J: My name is Jawad Shah and I am doing some research with young refugees about their experiences from their home country, coming to the UK and what it felt like when they came here as well as some of their experiences here as well. So, I'm going to start off asking some background questions. Can you tell me a little bit about your background and your home country?

R: I'm from Syria... from Aleppo\*. My parents are from Iraq but I born and lived in Syria. Aleppo\* was quite a nice place... very nice. People there... like... always talk to each other. They are friendly, they are nice... they always help each other. I came to England after.

J: You spoke quite positively about Aleppo\* and the people there. I mean... how much of your life did you live in Aleppo\*?

R: Thirteen years.

J: Thirteen years... OK. And you've lived in this country for...

R: Two years.

J: OK. Could you tell me a bit more... describe what it was like in your day-to-day life? Things like waking up, who was around you? Who were you living with? What was your normal routine like?

R: I wake up in the morning... always sun... always. I had a big balcony... really big. I always sit there, drink coffee with my sister and with my neighbours. Or, go down my house, in the street. There is lots of (inaudible) with my neighbours and my friends. I always have my friends with me. They were always at my house. I go school at 12 o'clock, I come back at four. I study and go down in the street, play with my friends and then come back home. Of course, one of my friends will be with me then the next day, same.

J: Do you miss that lifestyle that you had there? Was it an enjoyable one?

R: Yeah.

J: Obviously there were reasons why you came to the UK... did you come with your family?

R: I came with my family and my mum because my brother and my big sister were working somewhere else.

J: Could I ask about some of the reasons why you had to come to the UK? What happened or changed in Aleppo\* and Syria from your perspective?

R: In my area, there wasn't lots of problems because of the war but when there was a bomb blast in my school... after two weeks, my mum decided to come to England because she couldn't leave me like there in this area.

J: How did that feel? A school is something you sound positive about and your friends are important to you so how did it feel for there to be a bomb blast in your school?

R: I didn't feel... I couldn't feel anything. I heard a voice and then looked, and I saw blood. And then... army... one army... he picked me up and he covered my eyes and he asked me where is my home. My home was near the school, only one street between. I went back home, and all my friends came with me because my home was like the nearest to school.

J: OK. When your mum decided she wanted you guys to leave and come to the UK, what were the next steps? What happened then? What was the next part of the journey?

R: I wasn't really happy... well I was a bit happy. I always heard about England that it is a good country and is different to Syria. I thought it was different in a positive way. But... yeah I thought I would be happy. We went to Lebanon first. First my mum get the visa for England but we had to go Lebanon then Romania. We stayed for one month in Romania.

J: How did you travel between those places?

R: Aeroplane. From Lebanon to Romania... then from Romania to Germany and from Germany to here.

J: How long were you in Lebanon for and what was life like there?

R: I didn't stay there.

J: OK... you spent a month in Romania did you say?

R: Yeah.

J: Where were you staying in Romania and what was that experience like?

R: It's like a build... building. We all stayed there for one month until we get our next aeroplane. It was all Arabic people. We met them, we know some of them as well. My best friend here, he was with me as well.

J: How did it feel to have people with similar experiences to you living with you?

R: Erm... I didn't really like them. They was a bit different... from another... like Iraq. I don't know like how Iraqi people think. They were so different. I was from Syria the only one. They were looking at me... like... the way I speak is so different to their Arabic. They speak like my mum. They were like "she's so cute". I'm not cute- it's just the language. But I was quite happy because my best friend was with me.

J: Uh-huh. After that you went to Germany? But you didn't stay there? It was just a transition across to the UK?

R: uh-huh.

J: OK so you arrived in the UK. Tell me about your experiences then.

R: I saw it from the aeroplane and I felt like somebody is holding my heart. I felt that it's not a good place and I don't wanna stay here. I holded myself because I didn't want my mum to be sad because she's doing that for me. We went to our house. When I first came, there was people with us to tell us how to do the TV and everything. Telling us how we can use the buses and everything. They went to show me my room. I went upstairs and looked from my room out of the window. I smiled at the girl who was with us but then I start crying. I was shouting "I don't want to stay here." I went out of the house and shouted "No... I want my old house." But then I had to get used to it. Everyone was telling me you'll be fine. It's only like... you're gonna used to it. So, I had to stay.

J: Uh-huh... OK. Can I take you back to that time when you had just arrived in the UK and... is it the house that you're living in at the moment or have you changed house?

R: No, we changed it because I was so upset, I couldn't. My mum had to change it.

J: What do you think it was about that moment that made you so upset?... Was it the change? Was it the experience, was it the house or... what was it?

R: Everything. That I had to leave my country and my house... not because I don't like it and not because it's bad. People think I left my country because it's not a good country and the people there are killing each other. No! Syrian people are really nice... really nice. And yeah... it's not because it's bad we had to leave it... not because I wanted to.

J: Uh-huh. Yeah. So... you said that when you came, somebody helped you settle in, showed you how to use the buses... what else did they help with you? What things did you find helpful?

R: Erm... they helped me to find school. We didn't know how. They helped us... if we wanna do something, how we say where we have to go. Erm... if we wanna find work, where do we go? So, my sister went to the job centre, she found a job and now she's working. Erm... yeah.

J: Did you sister find it easy to find a job or was it quite difficult to find work?

R: It was easy because she speaks a good English and she studied in Syria so it was easy. First she was volunteering at a place called Brass... I used to go with her. Our people comes and you give the advice, yeah so.

J: OK... and was it the same for your mum? Did she have the same good level of English or were there some difficulties around that?

R: My mum... she speaks a little bit of English. When people come to her, she doesn't feel comfortable to talk English, but she knows. (Inaudible).

J: OK. So, it's been two years since you moved, and you said there were some positive things and people were helping you to get a house, use the local transport... buses, find a school. Was it this school that you came straight to?

R: Uh-huh.

J: Was there anything that was a barrier and didn't help you settle or didn't feel right?

R: It was the weather and the people. They are nice, but they don't talk to each other that much.... Like neighbours. After five or clock or six o'clock you don't find anyone on your street. That was the worst part actually, that made me sad because in Syria they stay out 'til two o'clock. There is always people outside... always.

J: You said it made you feel. Was it because it made you feel lonely or was it just different?

R: Lonely... and different and the weather. I felt that Syria is a hundred times better by the weather and maybe because it's my country.

J: You mentioned briefly your neighbours and people not talking to each other. How was your neighbourhood? How did people respond to your family coming to the area?

R: They were nice... if they see you, they say hi, good morning. But my neighbours in my new house... if I make any sound or invite my friends in my house, they always say like "you're making sounds". I'm like... it's four o'clock... I can make sounds. She's like no... you can't, I have a baby at home.

J: Do you think where you're living now and the community is slightly different to where you were living before?

R: Yeah.

J: In a positive way? In a not so positive way?

R: Not in a positive way.

J: Where you're living now, are the people from Syria, other Arabs, White British people or more mixed?

R: I don't really know 'cause I don't see them very much but I think... (inaudible).

J: OK. So, you started school as well as changes in your house. How did it feel to come to school? For a lot of children it's a big step... new school, new country. You went from a new house, not knowing anybody to starting school with a thousand other people here.

R: First when I came, I felt like they didn't like me because nobody was talking to me. I thought that I'm not going to have friends because I didn't understand much English so they don't have to keep explaining to me what they're saying. First when I came, they put me with all English people in class so I didn't know anybody from my country at the beginning but then I met someone Syrian in here.

J: OK. I notice you're smiling as you said you met somebody from Syria. How did it feel to have somebody who is also from your home country at school with you?

R: He was from a different place. I'm from the middle of Syria- he was from like... far away. So, he wasn't the same, we're not the same... even his accent is not the same but his sister was really nice with me and she used to come over to my old house but now she got married.

J: OK. So, what do you think it is about having somebody from the same country as you living near you or coming to the same country as you? How does it make you feel?

R: Better. Because somebody knows how we used to be. So, when I do something in front of them, they don't think it's weird.

J: Do you think they understand you better?

R: Yeah.

J: OK. So, you've been here two years. You said that at the beginning you felt like people didn't like you and you said there was a language barrier. How have things changed since then?

R: Now they like... smile. They say hi, but I know that when I go, I feel like that still talk. Most of the people, they tell me that they do talk about you. I feel sad because in Syria all of my school was friends with me... all. All my school. They used to come to me to help them and they used to call me 'barbie' in my area. All my area knew me because I was always playing and blah blah blah. They used to call me barbie.

J: Is that a name that you liked?

R: Yeah.

J: Where do you think that name came from?

R: My skin... there's a name for it in Syria so they're like 'my skin- then barbie.'

J: OK. You said that you felt that people still talk about you when you're not around. What sort of things do you feel really uncomfortable with or you're a bit concerned about?

R: The form that I'm in is all EAL students. So, they all say that's the smelly form.

J: Right, OK.

R: That makes me feel like... why are you saying we are the smelly form? We are from different countries but that doesn't mean that we don't take a shower. In Syria, my life was a hundred miles better than here and I still feel like that.

J: You still feel that... OK. You speak very positively about Syria which... [inaudible] I understand why you speak so fondly of it. I want to ask you a question about identity. Do you know what I mean by identity?

R: Erm...

J: Who you are really as a person. An example might be asking whether you feel being British is part of your identity. I might say that part of my identity is that being born and brought up in the UK makes me feel British. The fact that I come from a Muslim family is an important part of my identity. The fact that my parents come from Pakistan is also part of my identity and who I am. Being a psychologist might be part of my identity. All of these things are things that are important to me and therefore are part of my identity. Things like background, culture and religion might be part of your identity. So, if I was to ask you how you describe your identity, what would you say?

R: I'm a Syrian girl who lives in England... because her country is not very good now, but she loves her country and she doesn't feel that she's from the place that she's in now. She's different. I'm just different. I'm not the same as them... the way they think.

J: Can I ask you why you don't feel like you belong here?

R: Because friends in Syria are real. Here everyone speaks about each other, they're always mean to each other, if you cry... they laugh at you. Some of them are nice, really nice. Mariam\* here is from Lebanon. She's so nice, really nice... a really nice person. Some of them are nice,

they try to help me. A few months ago I was cutting my hands because I really didn't wanna stay here.

J: Uh-huh. The first thing you said was that you're a Syrian girl. If I was to split that into two words, you firstly said you were Syrian. Do you think that will always be the most important part of your identity?

R: Yeah.

J: Do you see yourself living back in Syria?

R: Yeah, if I could go back, I wouldn't think about it.

J: You'd move back to Syria?

R: Yeah.

J: Do you think your family hold similar views?

R: Of course. My mum tries to tell me that here is better for your education but...

J: You don't sound too convinced by that.

R: Yeah because in Syria my school was much better, even my maths class. I would always take like two hundred out of two hundred. Here I feel really down, down. No matter how much I study, nothing can go inside my brain. I just forget everything when I see the exam paper.

J: Why do you think that might be? For somebody who was getting 200/200, why are you finding it so hard?

R: Maybe it's because... my friends in Syria were like "Remmy\*, you can do it, come on. If you get 200, I'm going to get you this. If I get 200, you're gonna give me this." So, it was like lots of people... twenty people in my class and I was really close to them. I think I tried hard for them, but here people don't care. They're already English so they can't understand... they can't like...

J: ... you already said that you felt different and said that being different was part of your identity. Why do you feel so different? Is that different to everybody or more different to White British people in this school?

R: Different to some of them. Some of them are so cocky. They speak to their teacher in a bad way and I look at them like, 'Why are you doing this?' They speak to their parents in a bad way.

J: Ok... in a question about your identity you said you're a Syrian girl. Is being a girl an important part of your identity... being female?

R: Yeah.

J: What is it about being female... being a girl that's so important to you?

R: I don't know. I always say girls are stronger than boys because they can deal with things. They can make themselves understand that they have to do hard things for themselves and their future. Like... my best friend, who came with me, he doesn't come to school. In one month, he came for one day. That's it. For me? I come every day. I took my prefect tie and I did all this because I know I have to for my future. It's not because I'm happy at school or I have friends at school, it's only because I know it's not gonna help me if all I think about is Syria. I know that at this time, I can't go back so I have to look at my future.

J: Do you think your experiences have made you a stronger person?

R: Of course. I think I was a stronger person, I didn't like to cry in front of people. I was a bit sensitive... I always used to think good about people. If they were saying something in a bad way, I'd think no they're not but then later I realised they are saying it in a bad way. For me, I didn't feel it until I thought about it... they mean it in a bad way.

J: You said that your best friend isn't coming to school. Although today is about you, it seems your best friend is very important to you and maybe the most important person to you in this school?

R: Yeah.

J: ... In terms of your experiences and settling in. Do you know why he's not coming to school?

R: He doesn't like it because the people are so different. Like... when you go to your first day in a Syrian school, all the students around you make you feel more comfortable. They're all from the same country and you know the language very well. Here, he was... he was in Preston\* first in an English school but they didn't like him there. They were all White and he was the only person who was brown and they didn't like it. So, from that time, he doesn't like school.

J: Ok. So that very negative experience he had at his first school has had a big impact?

R: Uh-huh.

J: Have you had any experiences like that? You said he found it hard because he was the only one who was brown and everyone else was white.

R: No, because I know how to stop people from doing that to me. I know how to show them that because I came from Syria doesn't mean that I don't know how to read or I don't know how to eat. Sometimes they ask me like... 'do you know how to use our toilet?' I mean... what? Like, of course, yeah.

J: Do people ask you a lot of questions about your background?

R: No... I don't like to talk about it too much.

J: You said your best friend found it very hard to settle into school and life here. What sort of things helped you to settle once you came?

R: Myself. I kept telling myself that maybe you're just a teenager and you're just like... overreacting, because all teenagers are like 'Oh my God, I can't do this' if they hurt their nose they're like 'Oh my God, this is the end of my life.' So, I thought maybe it's because I'm a teenager... but it's not a small thing that I can't think about.

J: Uh-huh. It's a very big change for you.

R: Yeah... and I changed myself in here because I thought I had to change myself. I don't wanna stay the same girl who was in Syria because I'll keep remembering who I was then. I used to have long curly hair until there and dark... black, but then I cut it, I changed my style... I changed everything.

J: Ok, so that change of hair and style... what made you do that? Was it about being a new person? Was it about changing who you are?



R: Not changing who I am but I felt so different. Here, they are so different. Girls who are twelve years old have too much make-up, you think they are bigger, they have boyfriends... I don't know. I was just like... In Syria we're allowed to have boyfriends but when you're like 15. We don't put on that much make-up because you're still young. Here, if I do something childish, they look at me like 'aaah... what is she doing?' It's just me... I am doing this because I'm still a child.

J: Can I... The main thing that you said helped you was yourself. You felt that you have to make yourself strong and you have to think positive about your future. Was your mum and your family saying the same thing to you or was it all coming from within yourself?

R: I don't tell my family that I'm not happy. It was from myself. I felt that that if I spoke to people or my friends in Syria to help me, I'd have to think about it. I was like, it's myself... I'm the one who can help myself at the end of the day. I'm the one who is feeling whatever I'm feeling. Nobody else can feel it.

J: Do you think it's been helpful to speak to somebody about how you've been feeling and to talk through your experiences?

R: Yeah... Now in school they're checking my hands every week.

J: Did you school notice something or did you raise it with school?

R: No... teachers were very helpful. They did try to understand how I was feeling, especially Miss Hussain\*. She was trying to help me like... if I didn't come to school, she would come to my house and she will take me to school. She told me that this is the only way I can make up my future again... build your life again.

J: Is there anything else that school could have done to help you more?

R: Maybe if you think... like... make sure people understand that if like you're from another country, doesn't mean we don't know how to eat, how to wear clothes, we have style, we have everything.

J: Yeah... you mentioned that somebody in school checks your hands. Was that something that helped you to manage your emotions or...?

R: No... they're just checking my hands if I cut them.

J: So, when you were cutting yourself, how was that making you feel?

R: It was just... not because I wanted to kill myself, just because I wanted to kill some of the feelings inside of me. I'd always say, I'm a teenager... stop it now.

J: Was that happening for quite a long time?

R: Yes. Then some of the students went to the teacher and told her that she's cutting her hands.

J: You said you were not trying to kill yourself but trying to kill something inside you.

R: Something inside of me.

J: Could you tell me a bit more about that?

R: That... I felt that I can't live here. I just want my old country, my old house, the memories that I had, my friends, everything.

J: Uh-huh... some people say that the physical pain distracts from some of that emotional pain. Is that how you felt?

R: I don't know... It was just because I'm angry. I just do it.

J: Did you speak to your mum about it or your sister?

R: School spoke to my sister about it and now she's more careful.

J: Did you speak to anybody out of school?

R: No. [Inaudible]. Nobody can help. The thing is, it's not having friends here that will help. I lived for thirteen years in a place and it's not easy to move to another place. Nobody will help me. It needs more time, I think.

J: Uh-huh... there are services and places in the community that can sometimes help with things like this... including self-harm. [Inaudible]. Do you think it would be useful to speak to somebody in school or outside of school?

R: No... Nobody can help me. I know it will make my parents feel more sad because I'm sad, so I'm always pretend that I'm happy and having a happy life.

J: Do you think that's part of you and your personality?

R: Yes... because they're your feelings and nobody else can feel it. Everybody has different feelings, even if they seem the same. Another Syrian guy here and his sister, they were happy. They were happy they were living here.

J: When you're talking to me... I hear about this really happy Syrian girl who was always out playing in the street and playing with her friends at her house, it's nice to hear that there's still some of that same happy girl that's helping you get through the hard, sad and upset times in your life now.

R: No... I don't know. I feel my old self has just died... I left her in Syria.

J: Do you think you have tried to leave her behind in Syria?

R: Yeah, because I can't have that same girl here.

J: Why do you feel that you can't be that same girl here?

R: Because they'll say that you're stupid. I was always playing, I didn't put on make-up... but now I am, because I've seen people putting on make-up.

J: So, you think you need to put on make-up?

R: Yeah... to be at least a bit the same. They always straight their hair so I straight mine. Mine was small small curls before.

J: Do you think wearing make-up and straightening your hair is important to make you feel a little bit similar to others?

R: Yeah.

J: Do you enjoy doing these things?

R: Erm... I guess. I am a girl, so...

J: OK. What do you think are other people's views of refugees and Syrians in your school and in your area?

R: If they are from the same city, ok. Like my friend, Yousuf, he was from the same city, but people from different places don't help that much. In school, they hate them [inaudible]. If they are Muslim, they look at you like 'why are you not wearing hijab?' and Christian people are like 'why are you wearing a skirt?' In Syria, I used to do that as well.

J: Do you think people assume that you didn't have those freedoms in Syria?

R: Nobody in Syria asked me why are you doing this and that because we all do that.

J: Do you think other people understand what Syria is like?

R: Nobody can understand what it's like. All they see is what it's like now and on TV they only show the bad people. They don't show all the good people in Syria.

J: I wanted to ask you about that. What do you think the TV and media's perception of Syria is?

R: They show them as people who just kill each other. Once, my friend... he's a refugee as well... I don't want to say his name or where he's from. He was like 'do you mind if I swear at your country?' I was like 'Of course, yes'. Then he swore.... He was like something Syria... he said Syrian people are disgusting, that always kill each other.

J: How did that make you feel?

R: They're not, I know they're not. I don't care. The most important thing for me is that I don't forget that they are good. From what I'm hearing and what I'm seeing everywhere now, I don't want to forget that all the people there that I knew were all good.

J: If I go back to the question about TV and media, how do you think the media talks about refugees in general?

R: They make people feel sorry for them. Like, me as a person, I don't need people to feel sorry for me I know that I didn't leave my country because it's bad. I know it's good.

J: How do you think people generally in your community view refugees?

R: Some of them are nice. When they see that you don't speak English, they try to help you. If they see that you don't understand what they are saying, they will try to speak slowly. But some people, they just look at you. Once I was on the bus, I was sat here and my friend was on that seat, Snapchatting and this guy was like 'what are you photographing? Show me'. I said it's none of your business what I'm photographing. He was rude because I was speaking Arabic and asked me what language I was speaking and I said 'Syrian'. He then shouted 'Why are you here?'

J: How did that make you feel?

R: I felt... it's none of your business why I'm here. [Inaudible]

J: Is there anything else from your experiences of coming to the UK and settling in the UK that you think is important to share?

R: I don't think there is anything else I can help people with or share, but like... don't change yourself because you are here. If you are Muslim, don't feel like you need to be like a Christian because you are here. If you are from a country and you learned something in this country, you have a style in this country, don't change it for this country like I did... because you'll feel worse.

You won't have anything left from your country. Maybe if I stayed the same, they would have like me more.

J: You said that some people come to the country and feel the need to change or maybe lose some of their identity...

R: Yeah... In Syria, we all do the same things. We didn't ask 'what is your religion?' This question was like bad in our country because it didn't matter what his religion is. I think here some people think that Muslims are bad because of what they see happen.

J: Syrian has a big Muslim and a big Christian population, so you feel that people accept people more for who they are?

R: Yeah... [inaudible]. Here, some Muslim people used to say to me, 'Why are you wearing a skirt?'... but when they got to know me, now they're friends with me. They know who I am as a person, not only as a Muslim person who is not wearing a hijab.

J: Uh-huh. Is there anything else that you might want to share?

R: I think... no.

J: OK, as a last question, what were the key things that helped you to feel like you could live here and be happy here?

R: The only thing that helped me is me and that my parents are helpful compared to some of the other parents I see here.

J: What would have made your experiences better?

R: Now I know how people are, I don't always think good of all the people. Now I know how to answer people if someone was cocky or wanted to fight with me, I know how to make him know that he did something wrong but at the same time not make it worse.

J: Do you think an important thing is to be strong enough and ready to stand up for yourself?

R: Yeah... most of the students who were really bad to me, now smile at me and try to talk to me.

J: OK... It's been really helpful to hear about your experiences. Would you like to leave it there?

R: Uh-huh. OK.

